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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE ST., N. Y.
NEW YORK, November 19, 1892. ISSUED WEEKLY.

{ PRICE }
{ 5 CENTS. }

Vol. II.

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THE WOLF BOYS OF MICHIGAN.

By JAS. D. MONTAGUE.



They screamed themselves hoarse, and yet heard no response save from the wolves themselves. Suddenly, four big black wolves came in sight.

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The Wolf Boys of Michigan.

A STORY OF THE GREAT NORTH-WEST.

By JAS. D. MONTAGUE,

Author of "The Boy Pedestrians," "Leon the Outlaw," "Pinkerton's Boy Detectives," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE AMERICAN WOLF—A TERRIBLE FATE.

BEFORE the population of the great North-west grew to one-tenth of what it is now, the settlers had two enemies to contend with that tried their patience beyond endurance at times. They were the American Indian and his prototype, the American wolf.

Sometimes the Indian could be reasoned with, could be induced to rest awhile from his work of hair-lifting. But not so with the wolf. He never would listen to reason, as long as he could snap, snarl and tear things to pieces.

When the wolf became very hungry, by reason of the deep snow, which often prevented his game from stirring abroad, he would gather his friends in great numbers and pay a visit to the cabins of the settlers, devour his pigs, cows, horses, or anything else that had flesh and blood in its make up. They would eat up the wife or child, and stand around the cabin, daring the head of the family to come out. Talk about Indians! The American wolf of the great North-west was as dangerous a foe as the settlers ever encountered.

Left alone by himself, and the wolf is a veritable coward. But when they go in gangs they will attack anything or anybody if pushed by hunger.

So dangerous did they become that the Legislatures of several States of the North-west enacted laws to encourage their destruction. The sum of one dollar was paid for every wolf-scalp delivered to the proper authority of each county.

These laws induced many brave, hardy settlers to organize wolf-hunting parties and follow them up through the great forests.

In the early days of the settlement of Michigan the wolf-scalp law induced many men to become wolf-hunters, some of whom became justly celebrated for their daring exploits, hair-breadth escapes, and great success in turning in scalps to the State agents appointed for their reception.

The settlers on Michigan River suffered immense losses for several years, and then commenced a war of extermination against the brutes.

Among the settlers on Michigan River was the family of Ted McCue, as brave a man as ever drew a bead or felled a tree.

He had a son and daughter.

Dan McCue was just eighteen at the time of which we write, a handsome, hardy young athlete, who could handle a rifle or knife as well as he could the ax.

Nora McCue was just sixteen, the prettiest rosy-cheeked lass on the river, modest and unassuming, the pride of her parents and brother, as well as the pet of her friends.

One day Ted McCue went out into the woods not a quarter of a mile from his cabin. He carried his faithful rifle, without which he never ventured out.

He was not aware that the wolves had swept down into his vicinity in any more than their usual number. He had often secured a dozen scalps in a single day, within rifle-shot of the settlement, and this afternoon he stepped out to see if he could not secure some game for his larder, expecting at the same time to get a scalp or two.

He had scarcely entered the forest ere he saw a fine buck.

"By the stars!" he exclaimed in a low tone, as he drew a bead on the noble animal. "He must be afraid of the wolves, if he comes so near the settlement. Crack! Ah! Bess never misses! He must have leapt six feet into space. He's a

fine fellow, and will give us meat for a fortnight."

McCue drew his hunting-knife and bled the buck by opening the jugular vein. As the warm blood spurted out over the snow a steam arose in the frosty air above, and the smell of fresh blood was quite pronounced.

"I must hurry up before the wolves get a smell of this," he muttered to himself, as he proceeded to cut off the two hind-quarters.

He had not severed the parts ere he heard a snorting sound in the bushes not twenty paces away. He knew what it was. He was perfectly familiar with it, and knew just what it meant.

Looking around he saw the black snout of a wolf in the bushes pointed directly at him.

He had reloaded his faithful rifle, and in another instant its sharp whip-like crack sounded the death-knell of the wolf.

"That's a dollar to go with the meat," said McCue, reloading his rifle. The charge sent home, he stalked forward to secure the scalp. At the same moment he heard several short, sharp, snappy barks in the woods on the left.

"They have caught the smell of the buck's blood," he muttered. "I must hurry up and leave 'em the hide, head and fore-quarters. That will give me time to get back to the cabin."

He secured the scalp of the dead wolf and started to return to the carcass of the deer, when he was dismayed at seeing the black brutes hurrying forward to the same part with their eager swiftness. There were fully two score of them.

"By all the stars!" he exclaimed. "I've lost my meat. I must look out for my bacon now. That carcass won't last 'em two minutes, and be just enough to give 'em a taste of blood."

He turned and made a break in the direction of his cabin. A dozen wolves saw him and gave chase. He saw he was pursued, stopped a moment, took deliberate aim and fired. It would not do to miss now. His life depended on giving them a taste of blood on the spot.

Crack!

A short, sharp yell escaped the victim as he rolled over in the snow. His hot blood spurted out on two of his companions. They could not resist their craving for blood, and so sprang upon him and tore him to pieces.

McCue profited by the momentary delay to hasten forward, reloading his trusty weapon as he went.

But the respite was only momentary. Nearly a score of the hungry brutes dashed forward in pursuit. They came close to his side, their red tongues hanging and white fangs gleaming.

Crack!

Another wolf down.

Only half stopped to rend him; the others sprang at the hunter.

Crash! Crash!

The clubbed rifle crushed the skulls of two more as they came in reach of his powerful arm.

Whack! Crash!

Howls and fierce snapping were heard on every side of him.

"Off, you brute! Good Lord, they're thicker'n mosquitoes in summer!"

He drew his knife and cut right and left. Several were cut nearly in two. But they seemed to spring up out of the ground, so numerous were they.

The knife allowed them to come too close to him. Several bit him on his legs, and his blood was flowing freely.

"Help! help!" he yelled at the top of his voice. He dropped his knife, seized his rifle and com-

menced whirling around with it, making a broad circle as far as the heavy barrel would reach.

Woe to the luckless wolf whose head came within reach of that steel. His brains were instantly dashed over his companions.

Round and round he went swinging his heavy rifle in a death circle, and a wolf went down at every turn. But constant turning made him dizzy.

His head began to "swim."

To stop would invite the spring of nearly half a hundred wolves.

"Help! Help!"

There was a tinge of despair in the cry.

"Help! Help!"

He reeled and staggered like a drunken man.

A dozen monster brutes sprang upon him, bore him to earth, and tore him in pieces within sight of his cabin home.

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT'S SIEGE.

In a few minutes there was nothing but a few bloody bones left of the brave pioneer. The ravenous brutes seemed to have insatiable appetites. They swept on toward the cabin of the victim and howled around it like so many demon spirits from the lowest regions of Pluto.

"Oh, my God!" groaned Mrs. McCue, her usually ruddy face blanched with anxious fear. "Your father is in danger, children."

"No, mother," said Nora. "He would climb a tree if there were too many for him."

Young Dan McCue wore an anxious look on his face.

He took down his rifle and kept up a steady fire, bringing down a wolf at every shot.

"Say, brother!" and Nora appealed to her brave brother to quiet her mother's fears. "wouldn't papa climb a tree if they got too thick for him?"

"Of course he would," was the quiet reply.

Mrs. McCue's fears were relieved in a measure. But the loving wife was still anxious.

"If he has to stay up in a tree," she said, "he will freeze to death."

"They will not be apt to stay long, mother," said young Dan. "I'll soon knock over enough of them to give 'em all a good supper. Then they'll go away."

Crack! crack! crack! went Dan's rifle, and the work of death went on.

Night came, and intense darkness covered the earth.

"My son," said Mrs. McCue, going to the side of her son, "what shall we do? what shall we do? Your father will perish in this cold."

"Mother," said Dan, in a low, sad tone of voice, "poor father is no more."

A shriek burst from the mother's lips.

"Dan! Dan! what do you mean?" she cried, as soon as she could speak.

"Mother, do try to bear it quietly. I know father is dead, because if he was up a tree he would have kept them there by killing some of them. They would not have left him there, but howled around the tree all night."

Mrs. McCue gave a groan and sank down in a death-like swoon.

She intuitively knew that Dan had reasoned correctly, and that those ravenous brutes outside the cabin had torn her brave, loving husband to pieces and devoured him.

"Nora! Nora!" called Dan, "look to mother. Poor mother! Poor father!"

CHAPTER III.

THE WOLF BOYS—MIKE REAGAN'S WONDERFUL SHOT.

Nora screamed at first but, in another moment she was kneeling by the side of her mother, trying to restore her to consciousness.

"Pour water in her face," said Dan, without once turning away from the work of wolf-killing. He could yet see the brutes outside, for the snow on the ground aided him in that respect.

Crack! went his rifle and down went a wolf. Sometimes two were slain at one shot, when they were in range.

He was avenging his father's cruel death, and that was the one grand moving power of his soul at the moment.

Hour after hour passed, and still the voracious brutes howled around the cabin, and Dan McCue's rifle shot rang out every minute or two. Sometimes he missed, but seldom, and when he only wounded the others pounced upon the luckless one and tore him to pieces.

Nora succeeded in getting her mother to her bed, and then applied such simple restoratives as the pioneers used in those days.

She came to only to realize her terrible, irreparable loss. She moaned all the long night, calling piteously for her loved one. Nora mingled her tears with her mother's. But Dan went on with his work of vengeance, his lips compressed and eyes flashing.

Crack! crack! went his rifle all through the night, and the death-roll outside increased with nearly every shot.

At last daylight came, and the howling monsters slunk away into the forest, gorged with wolf flesh, of which over half a hundred had been devoured.

Just as the sun was rising above the tree-tops, Dan McCue opened the cabin door and stepped outside.

The sight that met his eyes was truly blood-curdling. The snow was actually blood-red on that side of the cabin where he had kept up the firing during the night. Wolf tails, feet and heads were scattered about on every side, and bones were as thick as leaves in the forest in autumn.

Dan McCue looked on the scene with some degree of satisfaction. But he did not stop long to gaze upon it. He hastened towards the forest to find some trace of his father.

Ere he had gone three hundred yards he came across the barrel of his father's trusty rifle, lying in the snow, among a pile of bones, and covered with blood.

A groan escaped him as he saw a shoe which he recognized, and pieces of his father's clothing. Just a little farther on he found the knife his father had dropped when he seized his rifle to make a last, determined stand for his life.

Again he groaned.

He loved his brave, kind father with a love akin to idolatry.

"Oh, father!" he groaned, at last breaking down. "It's awful! Poor mother's heart will break!"

He found the head and a few bones, which he recognized as belonging to the human frame. These he placed in a pile together, and was about to proceed to a neighbor's house, when he saw three neighbors approaching, rifles in hand.

"Hello, Dan!" exclaimed one of the men. "Out after scalps, too?"

"No," was the sad reply. "I am trying to find all that's left of father."

"My God! Do you mean to say they tore him up last night?"

"Yes," said Dan. "Here's where he fell, and here's all I can find of him."

The three friends of the family gathered up the remains, and buried them two days later.

Everybody in the settlement condoled with the bereaved family, and an organized band of wolf-hunters was formed for the purpose of exterminating the ravenous brutes.

Sixty wolf scalps were collected from the number slain that night by Dan McCue and his father, and given to the family. The bounty for them would be a big sum to them in those days.

One day, about a month after the death of his father, young Dan McCue came into the cabin, and said:

"Mother, I am going to turn wolf-hunter."

"What?" exclaimed his mother, turning deathly pale at the thought.

"Yes, mother. I've thought it over, and have made up my mind. It seems that whenever I kill one of the brutes I feel easier and better in my mind, for it's a duty I owe the State and the memory of my father."

"You may—fall—as—he fell!" said his mother huskily.

"No, I will not go alone, mother. Bob Stewart will go with me, and one or two others."

"Very well," she said with a sigh, as Dan passed into his room and closed the door.

Dan McCue and Bob Stewart were about the same age, and had shot many a deer, wolf and bear on Michigan River. They were firm friends and brave youths, having a thorough knowledge of the habits of the wolf.

They had agreed to enter into a copartnership crusade against the wolves, and at once prepared to go to work.

"There's a fortune in it, Bob," said Dan, "and no end of vengeance for me."

"Yes," replied Bob, "and no end of adventures, which both of us like. I can get ready in two days."

"So can I. Mold plenty of bullets, and get everything ready for a month in the woods."

They went to work making preparations to start.

The news passed from mouth to mouth in the settlement that Dan and Bob were going on a wolf hunt for vengeance and scalps.

No little excitement was the result. Several old men endeavored to dissuade them from the undertaking.

Said one:

"It's worse than dangerous, boys, at this time o' year. The hard winter has made 'em fierce an' hungry, an' they'll go in bigger gangs."

"Just what we want, Uncle Si," replied Bob.

"Better git ole 'Snap' to go with you, then," suggested Uncle Si.

Old 'Snap' was a long, lank, cadaverous Yankee from Maine, who had shot wolves in the lumber regions of that State years before. He had shot hundreds of them on the Michigan River, and was known as the best hunter in the settlement. They called him Snap because he had a snappish way about him at times. But he was true grit every time, and the boys knew it, so they concluded to have him go with them if they could prevail on him to do so.

Dan went to his cabin, which was on the other side of the river, and found him at home. There were two other young men there, one of whom was an Irish youth of twenty years of age, who had just come out from his home beyond the seas to better his fortunes.

"Snap," said Dan to the old hunter, "Bob Stewart and I are going after wolf scalps. Uncle Si says we must have you along, and we think so too."

"Yer do, hey?" snapped the old hunter.

"Yes. Will you go?"

"Yes."

It was given with a snap, but Dan knew the man and liked his snap.

"See here," said the young Irishman, "me name is Moike Reagan, an' it's meself as can kill more av the bloody bastes than any man outside av Ireland. Bedad, I'll be afther goin' wid yer, av yer place."

Dan looked at him, and liked his honest-looking face. But he was an entire stranger to him—a new-comer in the settlement.

Dan hesitated and looked inquiringly at Snap.

"Let 'im go," said Snap.

"All right," returned Dan. "Have you got a gun?"

"Bedad, I have, an' a foine one it is."

"Then be ready to start in two days. You can get a dollar from the State for every wolf you kill."

"Be the powers, it's meself as will break the State!" said Mike. "It's a gold moine I've found, sure!" and he ran out of Snap's hut to go after his gun, which he had left at the cabin of one of the settlers on his arrival a few days before.

"He's honest an' green," said Snap.

"But is he game?" Dan asked.

"Dunno," was the curt reply of the old Yankee.

Two days later, Dan McCue, having laid in a full month's supply of food and fuel for his mother and sister, kissed both good-bye, shouldered his rifle, and started across the river on the ice, to join Stewart and the others at Snap's hut.

He found them waiting for him, armed and equipped for the expedition.

Each, except Reagan, carried a rifle, a long wolf-knife, and a coil of deer-skin thong—a small rope made of untanned deer-skin.

Mike carried an old musket, with a bayonet attached. It had evidently seen long service somewhere, as it had many bruises on stock and barrel to show.

"Where in thunder did you get that old thing?" Bob asked, looking at the Irishman's gun with no little curiosity.

"Sure, me uncle Tim in Cincinnati gave it to me," said Mike, looking at it with an air of pride.

"He said it wur in the war ag'in the Britishers, an' kilt whole companies av the red-coats."

"I believe you," said Bob. "Did you ever kill anything with it?"

"Sure, an' didn't I kill a pig with it? Bedad, I rin the bagonet clane through him."

"Oh, you stuck him, did you?" Dan asked.

"Yes, an' howly Moses, how he did squale."

"Well, I don't blame him for that."

"No—he couldn't help it."

"Now we'll be off, said Snap," proceeding to lock up his cabin.

They marched out, each man carrying a blanket strapped to his back like a knapsack.

Having locked his door, Snap took the lead, and started off down the river; the others followed in single file.

Their intention was to go down toward the lake where deer were plentiful.

There they knew the wolves would be thick, driven there by hunger to seek deer meat.

Their first wolf was found about seven miles below the settlement. He was an enormous big black fellow. Dan brought him down with a bullet in his brain.

"That's the first," said Bob, as they all started forward to secure the scalp.

Mike gazed at the dead monster in a way that too plainly told the truth on him.

He had never seen a wolf before.

"Bedad, it's an ugly baste he is," he remarked.

"It's meself as wouldn'd shake hands wid 'im, nor ate at his table."

Dan and Bob laughed heartily.

"No," said Bob. "Don't let 'em get familiar with you, Reagan; they can't be trusted no-how."

"Bedad, av I knowed that I would av stayed in the house."

"Why, you are not afraid, are you?" Dan asked.

"No-o-o," drawled Mike in a hesitating way.

"Oh, after you've killed a few you'll be all right. By Gum! There's another one—two, as I live!"

"Howly mither av Moses!" gasped Mike, turning pale and looking uneasily around; "let's go back!"

"Don't be a fool, young man," said Snap.

"Shoot 'em an' show 'em what you kin do!"

"Yes—their scalps are worth a dollar apiece," put in Bob. "Blaze away at 'em an' make a dollar."

"Hanged me av I don't knock 'em both stiff," said Mike, cocking his gun, and bringing it to bear upon the two wolves who, attracted by the scent of blood, stood with their heads almost against each other, snuffing the air with a hungry eagerness.

"Take good aim," said Dan; "it won't do to let 'em get away."

Bang! went the musket with a report like a small cannon, and the execution was marvelous.

Overcharged with buck-shot, the musket kicked worse than an army mule. While it went flying thirty feet to the rear, Mike went in the same direction, with his feet in the air. At the same time both wolves went down in the snow with more lead than they could carry.

CHAPTER IV.

MIKE REAGAN'S TERROR—THE WOLF BOYS PRISONERS.

SNAP, Dan, and Bob were astounded at the performance of the musket. They did not know it was overcharged, and therefore were not expecting anything unusual.

They stood with wide-open eyes, glaring at the Irishman rolling in the snow, for he had broken through the crust.

Just how he got there Mike had no idea. But as the wolves were uppermost in his mind, he naturally thought they were upon him.

"Och! Take 'em off! Take 'em! It's killing me they are! Murder! Shoot the bloody bastes!"

He scrambled to his feet and dived head-first into a bank of snow, kicking and yelling like a madman.

Dan and Bob roared.

"Gosh Almighty squeeze my liver!" exclaimed Snap, as he glared at the wild Irishman.

Suddenly the laughter of Bob and Dan caused Reagan to stop and glare around him. He saw no wolves, and, staring at Snap, who was staring at him, asked:

"Where's the wolves?"

"Humph!" grunted Snap. "Yer swallowed 'em!"

Mike rose to his feet and looked around, feeling his shoulder as if a twinge of pain held a firm grip there.

"You're all right, Mike," said Dan. "You just laid 'em out—both of them."

"Phwat?" gasped Mike, in astonishment.

"You killed both of them," said Bob. "Just look out there."

Mike gazed in the direction of the two wolves, and saw them both lying on the snow dead as smoked herring.

"Bedad!" he exclaimed, swelling up with pride. "It's Mike Reagan the wolf-slayer I am. Where's me gun?"

"There it is," said Snap, with a contemptuous gesture towards the musket, which was standing with the breech up, the bayonet sticking to the muzzle of the gun in the snow.

Mike ran to the musket, and seized it with a comical eagerness.

"Bedad, it's a jewel ye are, me darlint!" he said. "But phwat the devil brought ye out hyer?"

"Look here, Reagan," said Dan, suppressing an inclination to laugh. "How many buck-shot did you put in that gun?"

"Sure, an' I put in a half-pound," he said.

"Gosh!" snapped Snap.

Bob and Dan whistled.

"How much powder?"

"A handfal."

"Gosh!" grunted Snap again.

Dan and Bob roared.

"Did you feel anything hit you?" Dan asked.

"Sure, an' didn't I think it wur the bloody bastes!"

"Well, it wasn't. You overloaded the gun and it kicked."

Mike looked blank for a moment.

"It kilt the wolves intoirely, anyhow," he said, looking triumphantly towards the dead wolves.

"So you did, but you don't want to be kicked to death every time you shoot. Put in ten buck-shot at a time and two thimblefuls of powder, and you'll do as well and fare better. Load her up now, and let's see you do it right."

Mike proceeded to load the musket again, Dan showing him how much powder to put in. In a few minutes he had it properly reloaded, and was ready for another shot.

"Now let's get the scalps."

Bob led the way and showed Mike how to cut the scalp, which included both ears held together by a piece of skin across the top of the head.

"You'll get a dollar apiece for 'em," said Bob, handing him the scalps.

Mike took them and put them in his game bag.

But he began to feel the effects of the kick presently, and kept rubbing his shoulder and eyeing his musket suspiciously.

"There's another one!" cried Bob, espying one on the left and bringing his gun to bear.

"Howly Moses!" ejaculated Mike, springing backward against Bob so violently as to cause the rifle to discharge prematurely, and both to roll together in the snow.

The bullet from Bob's rifle went through Snap's coon-skin cap, and grazed his head so close as to burn the scalp.

"Gosh!" exclaimed the old Yankee, picking up his cap and rubbing his scalp, as though a hornet had come down tail foremost on him there.

"Get off! what the blazes do you mean?" cried Bob, kicking and striking right and left.

"Oh, Lordy!" exclaimed Mike. "Keep 'em off, Mr. Snap!"

"Gosh! Almighty!" ejaculated Snap, glaring disgustedly at the fool, "ef his 'skulp was worth a copper cent I'd take it, darn him."

Bob and Mike rose to their feet, and glared at each other.

"What in thunder do you mean?" demanded Bob.

"Who said wolf?" demanded Mike.

"I did; but is that any reason you should run into me and butt my innerds out?"

"I—I didn't mane it," said Mike. "Let's go back. I don't loike wolf-hunting."

"Gosh!" hissed Snap, putting on his coon-skin cap.

"You made me lose a scalp by your dratted awkwardness. Hereafter keep your eyes open, and look out for wolves."

Bob reloaded his rifle, growling the while. Dan chuckled till he was bent double, and tears ran down his cheeks.

Pretty soon Dan discovered five wolves in a bunch, pursuing something they were tracking through the snow. They were too far off for the hunters to get a shot at them, and the hunters were on the point of pursuing them when Bob saw three more in another direction.

"Gosh!" said Snap; "let's divide. We'll meet at the creek."

"Yes," said Dan; "you and Mike take those five, and Bob and I will look after these three out there."

Mike didn't half like the idea of dividing the party, but couldn't help himself. He went along with Snap, thinking him the safest man to run with.

Snap led off in a brisk trot over the crusted snow, Mike at his heels. Bob and Dan quickly

disappeared in pursuit of the three wolves they had seen in front of them.

The three wolves led them a chase of some three miles down the right bank of the river. Bob got one scalp from them, and then the other two disappeared.

Suddenly they came across the trail of a big pack of wolves. A slight snow had fallen on the hardened crust, and in that they discovered the trail.

They were evidently pursuing some kind of game.

"If we follow 'em," said Dan, "we'll soon come up with 'em."

"Yes," replied Bob.

"Hark! I hear voices!" exclaimed Dan, a moment later.

"I see four men!" whispered Bob, peering through the bushes.

"Indians, as I live!" gasped Dan. "Get behind a tree, Bob."

Both boys sprang behind and awaited developments.

"I see a white man with 'em!" said Dan.

"Maybe they are friendly."

"We'll see. Keep still."

The Indians—three in number—and one white man saw the two wolf boys as they sprang behind the trees.

"Sacre!" cried the white man, "what for you dodge ze tree, eh? Mon Dieu, ve ees very friendly wis ze huntaire."

"He's a Canadian Frenchman, Bob," said Dan to his comrade. "I guess he's all right."

"Yes—reckon he is."

The Frenchman and the Indians came up, and the two boys came up from behind the trees and shook hands with them.

"We are after wolf scalps," said Dan.

"Ah, monsieur," said the Frenchman, "zat ees our peezness wis ze wolf."

"So I thought. There's plenty of 'em around."

"Sacre! Too many huntaire for ze wolf," and Dan was suspicious of the Frenchman's dissatisfaction from that moment.

He said nothing to Bob, however, of his suspicions, and was about to resume the trail of the pack of wolves, when the Frenchman spoke to the three Indians in a low tone of voice. The next instant all four precipitated themselves on the two boys and bore them to earth.

"What do you mean?" demanded Dan, in supreme astonishment.

"Too many huntaire!" said the Frenchman.

"Ve vill tie you so ve vill not have ze too."

"There are wolves enough for all," said Bob.

"Parblieu! Ze wolf ees not too mooch many. Messieurs will stay wis ze tree."

Down the hill below them was a small pond of water now covered with ice ten inches thick. On the edge of it stood a large tree with huge gnarled limbs projecting over the ice.

A cruel spirit of devilry suggested to the Frenchman to tie the two wolf boys to those limbs and leave them to perish with cold.

No sooner had the thought entered his mind than he set to work to put it into execution. The deer-skin thongs, or lassoes, Dan and Bob had with them were used for the cruel purpose.

"Are you going to hang us?" Dan asked, looking the Canadian full in the face.

"Yes—ve vill hang you up in ze tree vere ze wolf cannot get you."

"Why not shoot us at once and be done with it?" he asked. "Why hang us like dogs?"

"Parblieu! Ve no like ze murdaire."

They were tied hard and fast, and then suspended, by the lassoes passing under their arms, to the gnarled limbs, several feet above the ice. Their guns were left standing against the tree, but all the wolf-scalps in their possession were taken by the wretches.

"Ven ze wolf comes to see you," the Frenchman said, "keek him on ze nose wis your foot, an' he vill go away. Adieu, messieurs!"

"May Heaven's curse rest upon you!" hissed Dan McCue, as the Frenchman and the Indians turned away from them.

The wretch laughed and threw him a farewell kiss.

"Dan," cried Bob, "if we don't hear from Snap soon we are gone!"

"Yes—if the wolves come we will be torn to pieces! My God! I hear them now!"

"So do I! Oh, Lord, what shall we do?"

The howls of another pack, out on their left, was growing louder every moment.

"Snap! Snap! Oh, Snap!" cried Dan at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help!" yelled Bob.

They screamed themselves hoarse, and yet heard no response save from the wolves themselves.

Suddenly, four big black wolves came in sight.

"Bob! Bob!" cried Dan. "Get your hands

loose! Pull hard! If we can only get our hands loose! Oh—oh! Ah!"

"My God! I can't get loose! I am tied as if iron bands were around me! Good Lord, we are gone, sure! Ugh! Off, you brute!"

"Ouch! Ugh! Kick hard, Bob! There! I broke that one's nose! Oh, Lord! We can't keep 'em off long at this rate! Oh, Snap! Snap! Help! Help!"

CHAPTER V.

THE RESCUE.

Snap and Mike pursued the five wolves they caught sight of, and followed them down to the river, where they got one shot at them.

The wolves then fled across the river on the ice; Snap followed them, determined to get a scalp or two out of the pack.

Down the left bank of the river they ran, the game leading them a long chase. On the way Snap brought down two more who showed themselves too prominently.

At last the wolves seemed to scatter, and Snap was puzzled which way to go. He stopped and took his bearing.

"We must cross over to the other side," he said to Mike. "Ther boys 'll meet us at ther creek."

Mike was quiet and submissive. He didn't like having the party divided, knowing that safety was in numbers in such times.

On the other side of the river they found themselves within a half mile of the creek, where it emptied into the river.

Snap was about to push on toward the creek, confident that Dan and Bob were already there waiting for him, when he suddenly stopped, motioning to Mike to do the same.

"Help! help!" came faintly to his ears on the wind.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed, and darted off in the direction the sounds came.

"Howly mither o' Moses!" cried Mike, darting after him like one in search of a refuge from impending evil.

On, on they ran, Mike finding it hard work to keep within sight of the long-legged Yankee.

Presently Snap halted, and listened again.

"Help! Help!" came louder and plainer, accompanied by howls of wolves.

"Quick, Mike!" cried Snap, darting forward again; "ther boys are in danger!"

A five minutes' run took them within sight of the tree to which Dan and Bob were tied.

To say that Snap was astonished at seeing the two boys tied up in that way, barely able to keep the fierce wolves at bay with their heels, would be but a mild expression. He was dumbfounded.

"Gosh!" he ejaculated, and then sent a bullet through the body of the big wolf who was making a fierce attack on Dan McCue. The shot had little or no effect on the others.

"Gosh!" he grunted. "Gimme yer gun!" and he snatched Mike's musket from his hands, and blazed away at the pack. At the distance he was from the tree, the buckshot scattered like hail among the pack, sending them howling into the woods.

"Whoop!" yelled Mike, on seeing Dan and Bob suspended to the tree. "We're coming! Down wid ther bloody bastes!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, running up to the spot and bayoneting a wounded wolf; "what's yer doin' up thar, boys?"

"Cut me down, Snap," groaned Dan; "I'm almost dead."

"Me too—cut me down, Mike," put in Bob.

Snap and Mike cut them down in a trice, and both fell heavily on the ice.

"Gosh darn it!" said Snap; "what does it mean?"

"A Frenchman and three Indians tied us up and took our wolf scalps," said Dan.

"Injuns!" gasped Mike, turning deathly pale.

"Och, the saints presarve us! Let's go back home, plase!"

No one paid any attention to him.

Snap got the particulars from Dan and Bob.

"Gosh Almighty!" he exclaimed, "that's Santene. I know 'im! Roast me ef I don't hang 'im by his neck ef I git my paws on 'im! Gosh!"

His little gray eyes snapped viciously as he spoke.

"You were just in time, Snap," said Dan. "I couldn't have held out ten minutes longer. They pinched my legs two or three times."

"So they did for me," said Bob.

"Split my liver!" hissed Snap, "ef I don't get a hanging afore I go home ergin'."

"Yes—Louis Santene—bad man. He knows me, too, I reckon."

Dan and Bob pulled themselves together and took charge of their rifles again, whilst Snap re-

lated what he knew about Louis Santene, the Canadian Frenchman.

They were enemies, and would not hesitate to do each other an injury if they could.

Dan had to wrap a bandage around his left hand, so much was it bruised in his desperate effort at pulling it through the cord that held it bound.

"I only want to get a chance at that Frenchman," said Dan, "I'll make him wish he had never seen a wolf."

"The Indians too," added Bob. "They were as bad."

"Yes—all four were alike."

"I'd loike ter give 'em a taste av me musket, the blaggards," said Mike in very indignant tones.

"Which end of it?" Snap asked.

"Begob, aither end wud settle 'em," said Mike.

Bob and Dan laughed heartily at the queer expression on Mike's face as he spoke.

"You don't hold it right, Mike," suggested Dan.

"Sure, an' who kin? The auld Nick is in it."

"Hold it firmly against your shoulder the next time you shoot, and brace yourself up."

"I will," he said, as he rammed home a charge of buckshot.

Snap and the two boys gathered the wolf-scalps, and then led the way down the river a little distance, where they found a pile of logs which the spring freshet had lodged against three large trees.

Snap gazed at the huge pile of snow on the logs and said:

"They'll burn. Rake the snow away."

Dan and Bob at once went to work scraping the snow away.

"Phwat is it?" Mike asked.

"We are going to sleep here to-night," said Dan McCue.

"Howly Moses!" gasped Mike. "It's freeze ter death ye will."

"Oh, well, that's better than to have the wolves eat us, I guess," remarked Bob.

"Oh, wirra, wirra!" he whined. "Whoy did I kem till Ameriky to freeze to death?"

"Gosh!" snapped the Yankee hunter. "Ef yer don't stop yer jaw I'll smash it!"

Mike looked around at the long, lank Yankee, and mentally measured him. He seemed satisfied that the measure was too much for him, and discreetly remained silent.

"You don't suppose that we intend to freeze, do you?" Bob asked, turning to Mike after a few minutes had elapsed.

"Begob, yez don't know how cold it is."

"Why don't we? We are as much in it as you are."

"An, know a blamed sight more, too," put in Snap.

Mike said no more, but went to work to help remove the snow from the pile of logs.

CHAPTER VI.

A COLD NIGHT—MIKE GETS KICKED INTO THE FIRE.

WHEN the snow was all removed from the pile of logs, Dan and Bob raked up a good quantity of brush, and packed it against the drift, whilst Snap busied himself at starting a fire.

The fire was very slow at first, and Mike watched its progress with a great deal of interest. It was a bitter cold day, and, as the shadows of night came on, it grew colder still.

The howls of the wolves were heard in the dark woods all around them. It would indeed be a terrible danger to spend a night there without a fire.

Mike shivered as he watched the fire, and mentally calculated how much longer he could live in that temperature.

"Just think of it, Reagan," said Bob Stewart, as he stood by Mike's side and gazed at the fire. "We've made ten dollars apiece the first day."

"You're roight, Mr. Stewart," said Mike, who was brave enough when there was no immediate danger about. "Begob, it's a foine farm I will buy when I go back to the sittlemint."

"But you can't buy a farm for ten dollars, for you wanted to go back awhile ago."

"Faith, av ye had been down wid thim black dogs as I wur, ye wud be glad to go back too, I'm thinking."

Bob laughed.

"I don't know but you are right, Mike. I prefer to keep out of range of their teeth and shoot 'em at leisure."

"So do I, begob."

The fire now began to blaze up finely, and Mike edged closer to it. Darkness had come on, and the hunters were about to make a supper on the frozen lunch they had brought with them

when a deer, hard pressed by the wolves, ran up to them, as if for protection.

"Do yez moind that now!" cried Mike, almost running into the fire in his eagerness to get out of the way of the deer. His immense antlers alarmed him.

On seeing the fire and men the pursuing wolves stopped and showed their white fangs. They dared not come any closer.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, giving the deer a bullet between its eyes. "Supper an' sculps!"

The deer fell in the agonies of death, and Bob promptly cut the artery in his neck that he might bleed properly.

The smell of the warm fresh blood set the pack of wolves howling like so many demons. They circled around the camp, seemingly afraid to come no nearer than a certain distance of the fire. Their eyes gleamed in the darkness like flashes of fire, reflected by the light of the burning logs.

Snap took deliberate aim at a pair of glaring eye-balls and fired. The bullet crashed through the brain of the wolf, who sprang several feet in the air and fell back dead.

His companions tore him to pieces in an instant.

"Now blaze away at the gang, Reagan," said Dan. "Your musket will get a half-dozen scalps at one shot."

Proud of being called on to do the climax, Mike threw his rifle up to his shoulder, took a quick aim and fired.

As usual the buck-shot did terrible execution, and the musket sent Mike heels-over-head into the fire.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap, seizing him by the heels and dragging him out. "I'll be snickered ef he arn't the derndest fool that ever lived!"

But quickly as Snap jerked him out of the fire, he was not quite quick enough to prevent a red-hot coal from getting down his back under his shirt-collar.

"Whoop!" he yelled, leaping to his feet. "Take 'em off! They've got me! Oh, for the love av God take 'em off! Murther! murther! They're atin' me up!"

Neither Snap or Dan or Bob knew he had a fire coal down his back, hence they laughed themselves hoarse over his grotesque antics. He sprang up several feet in the air, tumbled heels-over-head in the snow, and rolled over like a man in a rough-and-tumble fight.

Suddenly he screamed like one in mortal agony, and commenced throwing off his clothes.

Such unceremonious stripping was never before seen by our heroes. They all glared at him in the most profound astonishment.

They thought he had gone crazy.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap.

"Great stars!" exclaimed Dan McCue.

"He's got 'em!" cried Bob.

"Whoop!" yelled Mike, in a perfect frenzy of excitement. "The ould devil's got me! Howly St. Peter, pect me!"

In less than one minute he was shirtless.

The live coal that did the business fell to the ground, and the burning shirt attested how well it had done its work.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, on seeing the burning shirt. "Don't blame him for hollerin'! Fire's worse'n wolves every time!"

"Oh, wirra, wirra!" graned Mike, rubbing his back and shivering in the cold. "May all the fends catch ye!" and he shook his clenched fist at the howling wolves.

Snap seized the burning shirt and rubbed out the fire between his hands.

"I didn't know you were on fire, Mike," said Dan. "Put on your shirt before you take cold."

"Gosh, man, yer'll friz," said Snap, handing him his shirt. "Put it on, quick."

"It's half dead I am," moaned Mike, putting on his shirt. "Sure, it's trouble all the toime."

"You made three dollars by that shot," Bob remarked by way of a soother to his burnt back.

"Phwat's thray dollars to me back? Sure it's tin toimes thray dollars I'd give to be at home in auld Ireland, atin' praties wid Biddy Maloney. That blackguard av a gun is worse nor a mule."

"Didn't your uncle give it to you?" Bob asked, almost choking with laughter.

"He did, bad cess to him."

"You ought not to talk so about your uncle's gift," suggested Dan.

Sure, an' av he wud shoot it wanst I'd forgave him. The blaggard av a gun wud make a saint out av him at one kick."

"Maybe you can get him to go hunting with it when you go back to Cincinnati a rich man. You'll be used to it then, and can enjoy the fun."

"Fun is it! Bedad, it's the blaggard av a gun that has all the fun, I'm thinking," and as he dressed himself again his pains were eased by the odor of boiled venison steaks.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIGHT WORK IN THE WOODS.

THE savory odor of the broiling venison steaks made the wolves perfectly frantic with hunger. They grew more audacious every moment, circling around the camp and showing their white fangs and red tongues in a most vicious manner.

Dan McCue attended to the boiling of the steaks, whilst Bob and Snap looked after the wolves.

Crack!

Crack!

A wolf went down at every shot. The hunters had their backs to the fire, and the wolves had to face it. The result was the light reflected the wolves' eyes, thus making splendid targets of them.

Crack!

Crack!

"Supper is ready!" cried Dan, as he laid the savory slices of steak on the tin plates near the fire.

Snap and Bob gave each a parting shot, and then turned to and ate heartily of the steak. Mike pitched in, too, and did his share of the work without being kicked over for his pains.

The wolves came closer as the hunters ate. But the fire grew larger and brighter as it progressed, which drove them back.

All wild animals fear fire, and never go near enough to it to get the heat of it, particularly in the night-time.

Several fires built around a camp will keep out a thousand lions, tigers, wolves or any other beasts of prey.

So it was with our heroes.

"They'll never come near the fire," said Dan, as he saw Mike getting uneasy at the increasing number of shining eyeballs in the woods around him.

"Begob, it's more sinse than I had," remarked Mike, as he twisted himself in his clothes. "Av they know as much as I do about it, they'd lave it be."

"So they would," said Bob, laughing. "But even you had to be kicked into it."

Mike shrugged his shoulders, and glared around at the flaming eyeballs. Had there been no wolves about, he would have told wonderful stories of his prowess as a wolf-slayer.

The supper over, the Wolf Boys took up their rifles and prepared to open the battle with the brutes again.

"Whew!" exclaimed Dan. "There must be over a hundred of them around!"

"Yes," said Snap. "There's fifty dollars' worth o' scalps for us ter-night."

"Of course there is, and more too," said Bob, "if Mike will go at 'em with his musket. It's a grand old gun that can bring down five wolves at one shot. You are the only man in Michigan that ever did it, Mike."

"Thru for you, Mr. Bob," said Mike; "av the ould baste av a gun wudn't kick so hard, it's tin av the bloody craythurs I'd kill at a shot."

By this time the logs had become so well heated as to throw out great warmth, and the flames roared and cracked, while the wolves snuffed the frosty air.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The three rifles began their deadly work, and many a wolf went down with a bullet in his head.

"Mike, there's a dozen of them in a bunch out there," said Bob, suddenly turning to the young Irishman. "Give 'em a taste of your marksmanship."

Mike hesitated.

His shoulder was sore.

His back was sore, too.

He remembered how the musket went back on him, and didn't care much for the honor of knocking over five wolves and getting knocked over himself.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap. "He's afraid ter shoot!"

"Who? Mike Reagan afraid to shoot a musket at a pack of wolves!" exclaimed Bob. "Mike Reagan such a coward as that! Not much; are you Mike?"

"No," said Mike, desperately, afraid to have his courage questioned. "I've killed as many wolves as any other man. Where's the pack of bloody devils?"

"Just look out there," said Bob, pointing toward a clump of bushes in which a score of flaming eye-balls were flashing, at the same time dropping three bullets into the muzzle of the musket.

Mike raised the musket, aimed at the bunch of eye-balls and fired.

Just as he pulled the trigger, Snap passed within a few feet of him in the rear.

The recoil of the gun hurled Mike against him

with tremendous force, and both came near going into the fire together.

"Gosh! darn yer!" growled Snap, throwing him off and stalking away from the fire. "Yer blamed ole kicker is worse'n forty mules!"

"Hurrah for Mike!" yelled Bob Stewart. "You've cleaned out the bunch!"

"He'll clean out ther camp, too," growled Snap, "with that 'ere blamed kicker around."

"Mister Snap," said Mike, rubbing his shoulder ruefully, "I'll be afther swapping guns wid you av ye please."

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, "ef I could git them 'ere wolves ter shoot it I would."

Bob and Dan roared, and Snap blazed away at another wolf.

Mike picked up his musket, and looked it carefully over, half suspicious that something was wrong about it somewhere.

He never dreamed that Bob had slyly slipped three extra bullets into the musket just before he fired. Fortunately for him, however, the recoil did not strike him so as to inflict any damage.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIKE CATCHES A WOLF ON HIS BAYONET—COUNTING SCALPS.

WHILST the others were busy knocking the wolves out, Mike was standing by warning himself before the fire. The ambition to slay the brutes had been pretty well kicked out of him by the musket. He couldn't understand why it should kick harder at one time than at another, since he had made his charges uniform after the first shot.

Suddenly Snap shot at a solitary wolf on his right. The ball grazed his head, so hard as to craze him. He uttered an ear-splitting howl, and darted forward toward the fire, utterly blinded and half stunned.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, leaping four or five feet in the air to let the infuriated brute pass under him.

The wolf made direct for Mike, who was standing with his back to the fire.

"Look out, Mike!" screamed Dan.

Mike's hair stood on end in an instant.

He saw the beast coming, tongue out, eyes flashing and white fangs gleaming. The fire was behind him, the wolf in front. Retreat seemed cut off.

With a howl of terror more awful than any the wolves had given that night, Mike presented the bayonet to the crazed beast and received him on its point.

As the cold steel passed through his body the wolf uttered a piercing howl, and made a desperate effort to free himself.

Mike howled as loud as the wolf did, and raised him from the ground on the bayonet and held him above his head.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap gazing at the elevated wolf in amazement.

Mike soon saw that he had the advantage of the wolf, and proceeded to hurl him into the fire.

"Hold on!" cried Snap.

"What for?" demanded Mike.

"I want that 'ere scalp."

"It's moine, begob, an' I'll roast it on his head!"

And with that he flung the dying wolf on top of the burning logs.

Snap was mad.

A scalp had been willfully thrown away, which, in his eyes, was inexcusable.

"Gosh! darn it!" he exclaimed. "The fool ought to be roasted, too."

"Oh, that's all right, Snap," said Dan, turning to the tall, lank Yankee. "Mike didn't know just what he was doing. He was scared almost to death."

"Gosh! darn it, yes," was the snappish reply. "He thought ther critter had 'im," and the old Yankee chuckled at the affair as though no harm had been done.

The wolf was soon roasting on the top of the burning heap. First the smell of the burning hair filled the woods for a quarter of a mile around. The other wolves howled around, and seemed more eager than ever to get some kind of cooked meat.

Then when the odor of burning wolf meat came, it grew worse than at any time during the night. Snap and Bob and Dan put in a dozen shots as fast as they could load and fire.

"See hyar," said Snap, suddenly stopping and turning to Dan, "ef we don't git them 'ere sculps afore they freeze, we'll hev er tough job a-gittin' 'em off ther heads."

"That's so," assented Dan. "But how can we get 'em? It won't do to go out there after 'em now, you know."

"Yes, it will," snapped the old Yankee.

"How?"

"Build a fire out ther."

"Oh! Yes—that's so!" and Dan wondered he didn't think of that before.

Snap was a man quick to act whenever he made up his mind to do a thing. He secured two large chunks at the big fire and started out alone toward the wolves.

A chorus of howls greeted him, but the monsters backed farther into the woods, snapping, snarling and growling as they went. But for the two blazing chunks in his hand they would have torn him to pieces.

"Howly mither o' Moses!" exclaimed Mike, half expecting to see the brutes spring upon him.

"Oh, he's all right," said Dan, turning and taking two large firebrands and following after Snap.

"Come on, Mike," said Bob, taking up two chunks of burning wood, "and let's see the fun."

"Oh, wirra, wirra!" moaned Mike, "it's dead we'll all be av we go forninst the bloody craythurs!"

"Oh, come on, and don't be a coward," said Bob.

"I'll stay here an'—"

"The whole gang will rush down here as soon as we get away."

"Murder! Wait for me, Mither Bob!" exclaimed Mike, snatching up two large firebrands and running along after Bob.

They found dead wolves lying all round the place, and, whilst Bob and Mike held the torches Dan and Snap gathered the scalps. The harvest was a fine one, for, though many had been half devoured by the live ones, their scalps remained intact.

When they returned to the fire, and counted the scalps, they found that the day had been an unusually profitable one. The intense cold had driven the game to the shelter of the woods, and the wolves had followed with unerring instinct.

"This is what I call a good day's work," said Bob Stewart—"twenty dollars apiece. Why, that's a whole month's wages on a farm."

"Begob," said Mike, "it's three months worruk in Ireland."

"I think Mike has worked the hardest of all to-day, considering the kicks he has received, don't you, Snap?"

"Gosh! yes."

"Faith, av I had a gun as wouldn't butt so it's more wolves I'd kill every day," said Mike, swelling up with pride as his exploits were dilated upon.

Bob had occasion, after an hour or so, to go down to the river bank, but a few paces distant, to break through the ice in search of water.

With a hatchet which he carried in his belt, he began digging in the ice. It was so thick that it took him at least ten minutes to cut through it.

"Here's water, Mike!" he called to Reagan.

"Come and get some."

Mike took his musket and a tin cup, and started down to where Bob was cutting away on the ice.

Just before he reached the river bank, a huge panther sprang upon him from a tree, and both rolled together down the hill, and on the ice, Mike screaming murder like a lunatic.

CHAPTER IX.

MIKE AND THE PANTHER.

MIKE REAGAN's yell, when the panther struck him, was the most appalling sound the Wolf Boys had ever heard. It was simply frightful in its terrified intensity, and all three seized their arms and prepared to meet a terrible danger when they heard it.

"Ugh! Take him off! Help! All the Saints protect me! Take 'em off! Take 'em off!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, drawing his long wolf-knife, and darting forward to see what new trouble Mike had gotten into.

They heard the fierce growls of the panther, and, therefore, knew he had been attacked by some kind of beast.

The two Wolf Boys were on the spot as quick as Snap was. The one who was pecking the hole through the ice sprang aside as Mike and the panther came rolling down upon him.

Mike rolled to the right, and kept rolling over and over, yelling and kicking blindly, whilst the panther rolled to the left of the hole in the ice, growling fiercely, and making desperate efforts to get away from something that seemed to be clinging to him in the darkness.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, "it's a painter! Look out, boys!"

Bob and Dan instantly brought their rifles to bear upon the ugly beast, and sent two bullets into its body, which seemed to settle it.

The shots also brought Mike around to himself.

He suddenly ceased rolling over on the ice, yelling for help, and scrambled to his feet.

"Phwat the old Nick is it?" he asked.

"Painter!" said Snap.

"Painter? Phwat's that?"

"A panther," said Bob, seeing his ignorance of Western vernacular.

"Howly Vargin, perfect me!" groaned Mike, who had seen a panther in a managerie somewhere.

"You made a narrow escape, Mike," said Dan. "Sure, an' I didn't escape at all, at all! The bloody baste flew down from the trees on me head an' knocked me all in a hape. Begob, me shoulder is cut open. Phwat koid av a baste is it? I saw him coming an' give 'im me bayonet ter ate. Did the blaggard swallow it?"

Snap called for a light.

Dan ran back to the burning heap, and soon returned with a brand that gave a flickering light that enabled them to see an enormous panther stretched out at full length on the ice.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap, on looking down at the dead brute.

Mike's bayonet had passed clean through the panther's neck to the muzzle of the musket. The force of the leap had hurled the Irishman to the ground, and the right paw had given some ugly scratches on his left shoulder.

"Mike, old fellow!" exclaimed Dan, on seeing how the musket held the brute in such a way as to prevent further mischief, and which would have caused his death in a very short time, "you gave him his death wound yourself! He is the biggest painter I ever saw."

Mike was amazed.

He had no idea of even defending himself. The panther struck the bayonet by the merest accident, and was impaled by his own act.

But Mike was equal to the emergency. He saw that circumstances favored him, and he promptly resolved to claim all the glory.

"Bedad!" he exclaimed, "it's an elephant I would kill av he wur to jump out av a tree on me head."

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap, "ora cow ef she flew over yer head?"

"Sure an' I wud," was the prompt reply, as innocent as he was earnest.

Bob and Dan roared with laughter, and Mike asked:

"Phwat's the matther?"

"Oh, we were amused at your bravery," said Bob.

"Sure, an' it's meself as hasn't been toide up in a tree," returned Mike, taking a drop on their racket.

"Gosh," grunted Snap, a twinkle in his gray eyes as he looked around at Bob.

"Which shows you haven't been much of a wolf-hunter," Dan remarked. "Every wolf-hunter has to have one or more such adventures before he can claim to be a hunter."

"Begob," Mike replied, "av one gets kicked into the foire an' has a bloody baste loike that come down on 'im, he's a bigger man than ould Nick," and he stretched himself to his full height, as if proud of his achievements.

"You're right, Mike," added Bob. "You're done more than all of us put together to day."

"Sure, an' it's the blessed truth, Mr. Bob, you're sayin'."

Mike was pretty badly hurt, however, by the panther's claws on his left shoulder.

"I'll look at it," said Snap, as he neared the fire with him. He made an examination and found an ugly scratch.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed, "ef he hed hit yer neck yer wud never kick er gin."

"It's glad I am I hit him on his neck."

"Yes—yer killed him."

Whilst Bob and Dan were dragging the dead panther toward the fire in order to get his head and scalp, Snap was busy rubbing a healing salve on Mike's shoulder, and bandaging it up for him.

They gave him the panther's scalp and skin, and sat round the fire talking of the day's adventures.

But few wolves came about the camp after the logs became well ablaze. The fire burned brightly, making it very comfortable for our heroes, who rolled in their blankets and slept soundly to daylight.

When they arose from their blankets the fire was burning brightly. But the dead wolves and panther they found hard frozen.

The deer was kept too close to the fire to freeze, however, so they were able to have plenty of venison steak for breakfast.

Mike was very sore from the wound on his shoulder, and Dan's hand was painful to use. But they did not complain. They ate heartily

of the venison steak, and then prepared to continue their trip down the river.

"Hide that painter skin," said Snap to Mike. "It's too heavy to carry."

"Sure, an' where wud I be afther hoiding it?"

"Give it to me. I'll hide it for you," and Snap took the panther hide and concealed it in a hollow log, stopping up the hole with a stone. "It will freeze and keep fresh all winter."

"Now, come on," said Dan McCue, "I want to find that Frenchman and his Indians again. We four can take care of them, I guess."

"Let's go home," said Mike, suddenly turning pale. "I'm awful sick. Sure, an' that bloody baste give me a hard blow."

"Oh, you'll be all right in a few days," said Bob.

"I'd lose me scalp av we met them Injuns!"

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap. "He's afeared!"

"No, but I'm sick," groaned Mike.

Snap shook his head mysteriously.

"Too many Injuns!" he said.

"Where?" demanded Mike.

"Up the river," pointing towards the settlement over his shoulder. "Our only hope to git away from 'em is to keep on down ther river."

"Howly Moses!" exclaimed Mike. "What's yer all waiting here for? Come on!"

Bob and Dan grinned and chuckled as they noticed the effect of Snap's yarn on the young Irishman.

They had no more trouble with him then, for he got over as much ground as any of them and had no more complaints to make.

CHAPTER X.

MIKE'S MISHAP.

THE wolf-hunters pushed on down the river at a steady pace, making no halt till noon, at which time they stopped on the river bank to wait for a sight of some wolves whose howling they had heard on the other side.

"They must be after some kind of game over there," said Dan, after listening to their howling for some time.

"May be so," said Snap.

Pretty soon they saw two huge black fellows cross on the ice to join those on the other side.

"There's some kind of game over there," remarked Dan again. "Hadn't we better go over there and see what it is?"

"Gosh—no!" said Snap. "Wait an' see."

"But we can't see anything from here."

"No, but we kin hear," was the old hunter's reply.

They did hear, for the howling became louder, as if they were joined by more wolves every minute.

Several small packs were seen crossing the river on the ice, and hastening into the woods beyond.

It was so very cold that a half hour's cessation from walking caused our heroes to suffer.

"Come," said Snap, starting out to cross the river on the ice.

Bob and Dan promptly responded by following. But Mike hesitated.

"Oh, Mr. Snap," he pleaded, "phwat makes yer go over there? Sure an' don't you hear a thousand wolves over there?"

"Gosh, yes!" replied Snap, "thar's er thousan' sculps thar, too!"

"I—I—won't go!" said Mike, with a very determined air and tone.

"Good-bye—take good care of yourself. If you meet the Indians—"

"Blame if I'm going to stay hyer," said Mike, suddenly darting forward to join them.

"Oh, I thought you were not going with us?" said Dan.

"Sure, an' wud I lave yez to go alone?"

"No, I guess not," said Bob, "because you are afraid to go alone yourself."

"No," protested Mike.

"Gosh, yes," said Snap,

"Me afraid! Faith, I've kilt more wolves an' panthers than the whole av yez."

"But you really didn't mean to do it, now, did you?" Bob asked.

"Yes—I ain't afraid of wolves."

"Glad to hear it," said Snap, sententiously.

"Lots of 'em over hyer. Look thar."

He pointed down the river to where, a mile below, a pack of thirty or forty of the black brutes was crossing on the ice.

Dan whistled as he saw them.

"Whew!" exclaimed Bob. "We're in for it this time. Is your gun loaded, Mike?"

Mike was pale as a ghost.

"I—I—don't know," he stammered.

"Why don't you look and see? What in thunder do you mean by going at a thousand wolves with nothing but a bayonet?"

"Gosh, he's a brave 'un," said Snap.

Mike dropped his ramrod into his musket, and found that it was loaded all right.

"Come on," said Snap, leading the way toward the woods.

In a few minutes they had gained the woods, and were pushing forward toward the howling pack.

"Whew! what a racket they make!" exclaimed Bob, as the din became almost deafening.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, when they came in sight of the swarm of black brutes. "We must take a tree. Thar's too many of 'em. They'd tear us ter pieces!"

"Howly Moses!" gasped Mike, making a break for a tree, up which he climbed with an astonishing agility.

Snap winked at Dan and Bob, who started with him towards another tree much nearer to the wolves.

"Hould on!" screamed Mike, on seeing that they were not going up the same tree with himself. "Don't lave me hyer! Say! Phwat do yer mane! Hyer! Come back!"

They paid no attention to him, but pushed their way to the tree they had selected and climbed up into it as quick as they could.

Mike's voice attracted some of the wolves. They turned and saw Bob going up the tree. With fierce howls they sprang forward and surrounded the tree—or a portion of them did, for the others remained to gorge themselves on the deer they had run down. That was the cause of their gathering in such force.

On finding himself separated from the others, Mike started to descend for the purpose of re-joining them. But several wolves saw him and made a dash for him.

"Ugh, yer ugly bastes!" yelled Mike, shinning it up the tree again, reaching the lower limbs just in time to swing himself up out of danger.

"Better stay there, Mike!" sung out Dan. "They can't climb, you know!"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Snap, Dan and Bob each laid out a wolf with their trusty rifles. A few moments later, the smell of fresh blood from the dead ones excited the other wolves, and then the feast in which wolf ate wolf began. Full half a hundred gathered under the tree and fought and howled for a taste of blood.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Three more of the brutes were laid out. The three men overhead determined to make all the money there was in that pack. They loaded and fired as rapidly as possible. As fast as a wolf fell, the others sprang upon and tore him to pieces, so ravenously hungry were they. The few wolves who had chased Mike up his tree, now deserted him and ran to the other, where business was more lively and wolf-meat more plentiful.

"Say, Mike!" called out Bob.

"Phwat is it?" Mike answered.

"Come over here and help us."

"Bedad, it's a wise man I am, Mr. Bob: Av they let me alone, I will be as polite meself."

"Then blaze away at 'em from where you are. You're just far enough away to make your buckshot scatter."

"Yes," said Dan. "You can kill a dozen at one shot. Let 'em have it, Mike."

"I will, begorra. See me kilt the whole gang!" Mike balanced himself well on the limb, took deliberate aim at the pack of wolves under the other tree, and pulled the trigger.

The next moment he found himself lying half stunned on the ground and his musket lodged in the limbs of the tree.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, as he surveyed the result of the shot. "He's gone ef he don't climb agin!"

"Hi—hi—hi!" yelled Bob. "Get up from there!"

Fortunately the musket did such mischief among the brutes that not one noticed his fall from the tree. It seemed that no two buckshot hit the same wolf, hence about a dozen were wounded, some badly and others slightly.

The wounded leaped and howled and the others sprang upon them, like fierce tigers, and inaugurated a general free fight.

Mike quickly recovered, and sprang up the tree again with the agility of a squirrel, groaning and swearing like a pirate.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED CAPTURE.

ONCE more safely ensconced in the tree, Mike Beagan regained his musket and proceeded to reload it.

"By the powers!" he exclaimed. "Av I had a horse ter kick loike ye, it's his feet I'd cut off. Sure it's all me bones ye've broken, bad cess till ye."

"How are you, Mike?" Bob sung out to him.

"It's dead I am," he replied.

"Give 'em another."

"Begorra, I'm sick."

"What's the matter?"

"Me back's broke."

"Thunder! How did you effmb that tree with a broken back?"

"Sure, I didn't climb it wid me back! It wur me hands."

"Gosh!" chuckled Snap, giving another wolf a bullet in the head. "It's his heart that's broke."

"Load up and shoot again."

"Sure an' I can't," he replied.

"You won't get any scalps."

It was no use.

Mike was demoralized for the time being. He sat there in the tree cursing the hour he ever went on a wolf hunt.

In the meantime Dan, Bob and Snap kept up a continuous fire on the pack of ravenous brutes under their tree.

At such close quarters they did not fail to make every shot tell. The ground under the tree was soon covered with dead wolves.

But there did not seem to be any perceptible decrease in their numbers. On the contrary, they seemed to increase.

"Gosh," said Snap, as he blazed away at them, "ef we don't drive 'em away afore night we'll freeze ter death up hyer."

"We must drive 'em away," said Dan. "How many are here, do you think?"

"Over a hundred," said Bob.

"More'n that," put in Snap.

"Well, we will have to kill 'em off," Dan said,

"as we can't very well drive 'em away."

All three blazed away an hour or two longer, and by that time had thinned them out considerably.

Suddenly a couple of rifle shots were heard on their right and two wolves dropped.

Then two more shots followed, and two more of the black brutes fell.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap. "Thar's more hunters!"

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

A wild hurrah from Mike was taken up by the new-comers, who ran toward his tree, or two of them did.

But they proved to be Indians, and the moment Mike discovered that fact he set up another and very different sort of yell.

"Injuns! Injuns!" he yelled with the concentrated strength of his lungs. "Oh, for the love av God go away, Mr. Injun!"

The two Indians looked at him in the greatest astonishment. They were evidently at a loss to understand him.

"Och, now! Go away, yer blaggards!" cried Mike, hastily reloading his musket, pouring in a handful of powder and nearly a half pound of buckshot in his excitement.

The other two new-comers kept up a fire on the pack of wolves, who, on seeing new enemies approaching, began to show signs of retreating. They had nearly all gorged themselves on dead wolf meat, and therefore were not as fierce as when driven by hunger.

Snap, Dan, and Bob set up a yell in unison, and fired at the same time. That had the effect to send them flying. The three men then quickly reloaded their rifles, and dropped to the ground within ten paces of the new-comers.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, on seeing them, "thar's yer Frenchman!"

Bob and Dan recognized him at the same instant.

Both leveled their rifles at the Frenchman and the one Indian with him. The other two Indians were under Mike's tree a hundred yards away.

"Surrender, Sautene!" hissed Snap, "or by gum, ye're a dead frog-eater!"

"Sacre! Don't shoot!" exclaimed the dismayed Frenchman.

"Drop that gun!"

Down went the Frenchman's rifle.

"Up with your hands!" said Dan.

His hands went up above his head.

"Drop your gun, red-skin!" said Bob to the Indian.

"Ugh! Me fight!" grunted the red-skin, making an attempt to raise his rifle to his shoulder. Snap sprang forward, and knocked him down with his rifle barrel. The red rascal's gun was discharged in the air as he went down.

Snap promptly disarmed him, and Mike, who witnessed the proceedings from his perch in the tree, knew that hostilities had commenced.

levelled his musket at one of the two nearest to him and fired.

The discharge blew the red-skin's head completely off his shoulders, and the recoil knocked Mike twenty feet out of the tree.

He fell in a snow-bank, and was but little hurt.

"Murder! murder!" he yelled. "Take 'im off. Don't let 'im scalp me!"

The astounded savage, no doubt thinking him a lunatic, took to his heels, and by dodging behind trees managed to escape, though Dan and Bob each took a pop at him.

"Blame my hide!" exclaimed Snap, "that 'ere tool has killed one on 'em as dead as a wolf."

"And nearly killed himself too," remarked Bob. "That old musket sent him flying out of that tree like an old goose with a cropped wing."

"Yer can't kill sich fools," remarked Snap, with a wise shake of his head. Then turning to Louis Sautene, said:

"Glad ter see yer, Louis."

"Sacré! I ees no glad to see Monsieur Schnaps," said the Frenchman.

"Gosh! I know yer ain't."

"But you're glad to see me, are you not?" Dan asked, going up to the prisoner and staring him in the face.

"Parbleu, yes. Monsieur ees a fine youth."

"You didn't expect to see us so soon, did you?"

"Sacré! I hope I see you again, I say to mine-self all ze time, monsieur."

"Oh, you did, he? Well, I don't think you will see us any more after this. You did us a little service yesterday that we must repay with some interest."

Mike came up and stared at the captive Indian.

"Why don't yez shoot the bloody red nagur?" he asked. "Begob, it's meself as wud shoot the loife out av him."

"Vat ees dat?" demanded Sautene, turning pale. "Vat for would you shoot ze prisoners?"

"For good luck, yer blaggard!"

"He's the chap that tied Dan and me to that tree yesterday," said Bob, turning to Mike.

"Then shoot his head off av him!" blurted out Mike. "Sure an' didn't I do that same for the red nagurs!"

"Sautene," said Snap, "we have an old score to settle, an' we've got to settle it now."

"Sacré! I settles not wis you, Meestaire Schnaps," said the Frenchman.

"Gosh! Then I will proceed ter settle with you, gosh darn yer hide! I'll hev a fair show now, an' ther best man wins."

CHAPTER XII.

RETRIBUTION.

Cold as it was, Snap began to throw off his coat and roll up his sleeves.

"Thunderation, Snap!" exclaimed Dan, "you ain't going to fight him, are you?"

"Gosh, yes!" was the reply. "Sarch 'im an' take his weepins. I'll mash him soft as a rotten apple, the onery skunk."

"Why not wait and—"

"Gosh, no!" interrupted Snap. "I'd spile; I'll settle him now or never."

Dan searched the Frenchman and took from him what small weapons he had.

"Sacré! I will not fight wis Monsieur Schnaps," said Sautene.

"Oh, that's just as you like," said Dan. "Monsieur Schnaps will fight you all the same, I guess."

"Gosh, yes," said Snap, going at him with his clenched fists. He gave the Frenchman a blow between the eyes that sent him rolling in the snow.

"Whoop!" yelled Mike. "That was nately done, Mr. Snap! Give 'im wan on the nose. Whoop! Lave me git at 'im! Whoop! Ould Ireland foriver!"

Mike dropped his musket, spat on his hands, and danced around like a wild lunatic. A fist fight was his special delight, next to a bout with a shillelah.

"Sacré!" hissed the Frenchman, rising to his feet. "Monsieur Schnaps is ze grand coward."

"Gosh, yes! Monsieur Sautene is ze grand mogul, but if I don't settle my debt now I never will!" and with that he walked up to him and gave him another blow that rolled him in the snow.

"Och, murther!" yelled Mike. "Lave me git at him!"

"Oh, keep quiet, Mike," said Dan. "Don't make a fool of yourself."

The Frenchman arose the second time, blood streaming from his nose. There was blood in his eye, too, for he uttered a fierce yell and sprang at Snap like an enraged tiger. Snap was as cool as the crusted snow under his feet, and received

him bravely. He gave him a third blow that staggered him like a drunken man.

"Whoop! Whack! Whack! Ould Ireland foriver!" yelled Mike, dancing wildly around. Seeing the solitary Indian standing by with his hands bound behind him, he ran up and dealt him a stunning blow that stretched him at full length on the snow.

"Mike Reagan!" cried Dan McCue. "If you touch that red-skin again, I'll put a bullet into your cowardly carcass!"

"Sure, an' didn't yez want me to shoot 'im?"

"No. He's my prisoner. You have nothing to do with him, so keep your hands off."

Mike picked up his musket and stood by till Snap had settled his score with the Frenchman. He pummeled him till his face was bruised and swelled out of all shape.

Finally, the wretch cried:

"Enough, Monsieur Schnaps."

"Gosh!" hissed Snap, "yer ain't got half enough."

"Are you satisfied, Snap?" Dan asked.

"Gosh, no!"

"Satisfy yourself, then."

Snap cut a large withe, and belabored the Frenchman with it till he was tired. The Frenchman said not a word, but stood and took it with the stoical fortitude of an Indian.

"That will do, Snap," said Dan, when he thought the wretch was about to fall from exhaustion.

Snap dropped the withe and deliberately spat in his face.

Sautene made no movement to resent the insult. He knew he was powerless to do so, and therefore did not attempt it.

"Now, Sautene," said Dan, "we are going to serve you and that red-skin just as he and you served us yesterday. We will tie you up, and leave you to take your chances with the wolves, as we did."

Sautene made no reply.

He could not protest in the face of his own rascally deed of the day before.

Bob and Dan then took strong cords and bound them hard and fast, after which they were suspended to a tree near by, just as Bob and Dan had been.

Neither of the wretches made any protest. They knew it would be worse than useless for them to do so.

"I think that's about the way they served us, Bob, is it not?" Dan asked, after they had swung them up.

"Yes—only they took our wolf scalps from us."

"Oh, we don't want them. We have plenty of our own taking."

"Gosh, yes!" said Snap, "an' we'd better take 'em afore they freeze."

"Yes—come ahead."

All four went to work gathering scalps from the wolves they had killed round the tree during the siege. There was a goodly number, and the Wolf Boys were well paid for their trouble and peril.

"Good-bye, Sautene!" called out Bob as the party turned away to resume their journey down the river. "Hope you may have a good time with the wolves. If they come back before these dead ones freeze hard they won't bother you."

"Sacré!" hissed the rascal.

Bob and Dan laughed heartily as they turned away, and the two wretches were left to their fate.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WOLF BOYS FIND A REFUGE.

As they made their way down the river the Wolf Boys took Mike to task for shooting the Indian.

"You were too hasty," said Dan, "and the act may be the means of getting us into more trouble."

"Sure, and didn't I see yer takin' aim at the red nager an' the Frinchman? An' didn't Mr. Snap knock the Injun down? Faith, av I waited longer the blaggard wud av ate me aloive."

"Nonsense. We would have captured both. As it is, one is dead and the other has gotten away to go back to his people, and tell them that the palefaces are killing the red men everywhere. They'll come down on us like a swarm of flies in midsummer, and our scalps won't be worth two cents."

"Howly mither av Moses!" gasped Mike, rubbing his hand over his head to make sure his scalp was all there. "Let's go home, Mr. McCue! We've got wolf scalps enough."

"No," said Dan, determined to give him a good scare; "if we go back, we will only draw the savage horde down on the settlement. That would never do. There are too many women and children there."

"Gosh! yes," said Snap.

"We must fight it out ourselves," put in Bob. "Why, if we all had muskets like Mike, we could defy the whole tribe. Fill it half full of buckshot, and you'd kill a dozen red-skins at a shot."

"Sure, an' will they come till us?" Mike asked of Bob.

"As sure as that red-skin gets back to his people, just so sure will a thousand of them come down on us, howling like so many devils just got loose from the lower regions."

"Thin phat the devil do yez stay hyer for?"

"Oh, we are not going to stay here," was the reply. "We are going down the river, don't you see?"

Mike saw, of course, but he also saw that the red-skins could go down that way, too. That thought made him very uneasy, and the fact was very evident to his companions.

"Just keep a good handful of buckshot in your gun, Mike," said Bob, "and one shot at them will make 'em sick. It might kick you clear over the kingdom. But it will save our scalps, eh, Snap?"

"Gosh, yes," asserted Snap, his gray eyes twinkling with merriment.

"I'll do it, begorra!" said Mike, pouring a double charge of buckshot into his already heavily-loaded gun.

"Gosh!" muttered Snap. "It'll kick him double!"

"Yes, and make him sick of shooting so quick."

Of course, Mike did not hear the side remarks of the two hunters. He kept close to the others during the afternoon, peering in every direction for Indians. He had Indian on the brain, and took no notice of the wolves.

They pushed on down the river as fast as the condition of the snow would permit, popping over a wolf now and then, and getting the scalp.

At last the sinking sun admonished them that they must look out for a suitable place to camp during the night.

Dan mentioned it to Snap.

"I know a hut further down," said Snap, "whar we kin all sleep."

"How far is it?"

"Two miles."

"Let's go faster then."

They quickened their pace, and Mike, not having heard the conversation between Snap and Dan, believed that some kind of danger was pursuing them. He dashed on ahead, sometimes getting a hundred yards in advance of the party.

"If you see 'em, Mike," called out Bob, "blaze away at 'em!"

"Phwat is it?" demanded Mike, suddenly halting and looking back at his comrades.

"Indians!" said Bob.

"Och-ugh!" and Mike wheeled and ran back to meet them.

"Why, what's the matter?" Dan asked. "Did you see any Indians?"

"No," he replied. "I—I—wanted to—tell yez it wur very cold!"

"Gosh!" gasped Snap, as Dan and Bob burst out laughing.

"Mike Reagan, I do believe you are afraid of your shadow!" exclaimed Dan.

"Afraid, is it! Sure an' its Mike Reagan who has killed the most Injuns av all av yuz!"

"You haven't killed one, Mike," said Bob.

"Howly Moses!"

"It was your gun. You were too much scared to know what you were doing, and your old musket got up and kicked you out of the tree and then murdered the red-skins."

"That's it," added Dan.

Mike was disgusted. He looked from one to the other as if to ascertain their real object in talking that way.

"It's a blaggard ye are, Mr. Bob," he said, after a pause. "Me gun niver acts widout me consolat, an' thin, begorra, it's a rule ould male av a kicker. Sure, av ye wur ter shoot it wanst it's a corpse ye wud be."

"I'll show you about that. I'll use it on the next pack of wolves we meet."

"May the saints sind us a pack!" said Mike, devoutly handing Bob his musket.

"Oh, it's too heavy to carry," said Bob, laughing. "You keep it till we find the wolves."

"Yis, begorra, an' it's piking ye up you'll be wanting me whin ye shoot it," at which there was a general laugh.

By and by they came in sight of the hut, a strong log-pen with a roof on top made of split logs. The chimney was of stone. It had been built a long time, evidently as a sort of fort or block-house, though by no means resembling either.

Just as they came in sight of the hut, Snap saw and shot a fine deer.

"That's fresh steak for supper," said Dan, running forward and cutting the animal's throat.

"Which we had plenty of before," remarked Bob.

"But this will be more," Snap said, quickly re-loading his rifle. Then he went forward and cut the hind-quarters from the carcass, which he carried into the hut.

"This is just the thing we want," said Dan, looking around at the interior of the hut. "We can have shelter and a good fire all night."

"Yes, ef we git the wood," said Snap.

"Then we had better go out and get it," remarked Dan. "Come on, we've all got hatchets."

"Hyer's two axes," said Snap, raising a big flat stone on the broad hearth and revealing two heavy axes, very rusty, but quite sharp.

Dan and Bob were astonished.

"You've stopped here before," said Dan.

"Gosh, yes, several times."

They took the axes and went out to several old dead trees that had been uprooted by a summer cyclone, and began cutting wood of the proper length for the fire-place in the hut.

CHAPTER XIV.

BESIEGED IN THE HUT.

SNAP and Mike proved to be splendid ax-men. They soon had the log cut up and the others assisted in carrying the pieces into the hut.

A second log was cut up in order that they might have no lack of wood if another snow-storm should set in.

It was quite dark when they went inside and closed the heavy oaken door. Snap made the fire, and in a few minutes a cheerful blaze burned in the wide open fire-place.

"This is splendid!" said Bob, warming himself before the fire.

"Yes," returned Dan. "It's a good deal better than I expected."

"Bedad, it's a home to us, byes."

"Gosh, yes. It's a strong pen to keep wolves out," and he turned to the fresh venison quarters and prepared to cut slices to broil for their supper.

Soon after they closed the door of the hut a terrific snow-storm set in. The snow came in great gusts, and the dismal howling of the wind made the Wolf Boys feel doubly thankful that they had found such a comfortable shelter.

Suddenly they were startled by a gun-shot, out in the direction of the river, followed by the fierce howling of wolves.

Snap sprang to his feet and listened. His face was serious, and he shook his head as he tried to catch other sounds. The howls of the wolves continued, and then gradually died away.

"Somebody is lost in the storm," he said, resuming his seat on a log which Mike had rolled across the floor in front of the roaring fire.

"That means loss of life," said Dan.

"Yes—the wolves are following him up, to save him the trouble of freezing," said Bob.

"Can't we do something to save him?" Dan asked.

"Gosh, no!" said Snap. "He's gone down the river."

The four men sat gazing silently into the fire for several minutes, thinking of the horrors of the night and of their fortunate escape.

Suddenly a howl was heard right at the door of the hut, causing Mike to spring to his feet and reach for his musket.

"Do yez moind that now?" he asked, turning to Snap, who sat still and motionless as a statue.

Dan and Bob snickered as Mike prepared for trouble.

"Phat's yez laughin' at? Begorra, if the bloody bastes git in hyer, it's dead min we all will be."

Half a dozen wolves now joined in a chorus just outside the door.

"Howly Mither! Moses!" groaned Mike. "Is the door locked?"

"Gosh, yes," said Snap. "Ef yer mouth was locked, too, yer wouldn't talk so much."

"Sure, and do yez want the black dogs ter do all ther talkin'?"

"Gosh, yes, for we know then whar ther sculps are. We don't want your sculp. It ain't worth two cents."

Bob and Dan chuckled. Mike made no reply, but looked toward the door, as if half expecting to see a pack of wolves break it down and rush in upon them.

Suddenly Snap rose from his seat, took his rifle, rubbed the muzzle against a piece of the venison, and then stuck a small piece of deer meat in it. Thus prepared, he ran the rifle barrel through the crevice in the logs and waited.

The half-starved wolves seized it in their mouths as if they fain would swallow it. Quick as thought, he pulled the trigger, there was a dull report outside, and also a dead wolf.

"Why, snag me!" exclaimed Dan, "if that isn't a good idea! I'll fish for a bite myself."

"So will I," added Bob, proceeding to cut a small piece of venison to place in the muzzle of his rifle.

"Me too," said Mike. "Bedad, I wur a great fisherman in ould Ireland."

"But your gun wouldn't leave anything of a wolf, Mike, if one were to take it in his mouth," Dan said. "It would tear him all to pieces."

"So it would," put in Bob.

"Bedad, it's the bayonet I'll let 'em ate thin," he said.

He greased the end of the bayonet, and thrust it through the crevice.

Instantly a wolf, deceived by the smell of the blood and grease on the bayonet, seized it between his teeth and tried to wrench it from the gun.

Mike gave a tremendous thrust, and sent the bayonet to the muzzle down the animal's throat.

Of course there was a howl outside.

The wolf was so firmly impaled on the bayonet that he couldn't extricate himself. But he howled like all possessed, and squirmed worse than ever an eel did at being skinned.

Mike howled, too.

"I've got him! I've got him!" he yelled, clinging to his musket and dancing like a wild lunatic.

"Phat will I do wid him?"

"Pull him through and eat him!" cried Bob, laughing heartily.

Mike gave a tremendous jerk, and released the wolf.

His bayonet was covered with blood.

"Begorra, it's meself as gets the most blood out av 'em," he said.

"Put it out again, and stick another," suggested Dan.

Mike did so.

He felt brave enough now, when he was sure the wolves could not get at him.

Another thrust, and the sharp-pointed steel entered the eye of a wolf, penetrating the brain.

By this time the number of wolves had increased in proportion to the violence of the storm. They howled around the hut, gnawing at the logs in their frantic desire to get at the fresh deer meat inside. At the same time the severest snow known in that section for many years raged without. The snow came through the crevices of the logs in fine particles. But the heat from the glowing fire soon melted it.

"We'll git lots of sculps," said Snap, "but it will be like sculpin' rocks—all froze hard."

"That will do when we can't help it," said Dan. "We are sure of them, any way."

"Yes—we can get one every shot."

"But divil a wink av sleep will we be afther gettin', I'm thinking," said Mike.

"Oh, we don't want any sleep," Bob replied.

"Gosh, no," put in Snap, shooting another wolf through the head.

"Howly Mither av Moses!" cried Mike, as a huge wolf stuck his nose through a crevice, almost against his leg, and howled fiercely.

Dan took his hatchet and struck the wolf's snout a tremendous blow, splitting his face and head open.

"That's the way to do," he said, turning to Mike. "Old Moses' mother never killed a wolf in her life."

"Begorra," said Mike, looking at the bloody hatchet in Dan's hand, "it wur natelly done. Och, but do yez moind that now? The bloody bastes wud be afther atin up the house!"

The fierce brutes, rendered frantic by the smell of the deer meat inside the hut, were gnawing on the heavy logs, as if with the intention of tearing them away.

CHAPTER XV.

WOLF-CHARMED.

DAN and the others stood quietly by and listened to the howling and screeching of the wolves. They seemed to increase in numbers every minute.

"Bedad, it's glad I am they can't come in at all, at all," remarked Mike.

"So am I," Bob said. "They are hungry tonight and very bad."

"Gosh, yes," put in Snap. "They're worse'n I ever saw 'em afore."

"How long will they stay about here?"

"Es long as they kin smell blood an' fresh meat," was the reply. "They're hungry, an' no mistake."

"Then it's a good thing for us that we struck that deer as we came up."

"Yes. We may stay here a week. Who knows how long this storm will last?"

"How about water?" Dan asked.

"Snow," said Snap.

"How'll we get it?"

"Roof," answered Snap, sententiously.

Dan looked up and saw no way of getting out on the roof.

"Can we get out on the roof?" he asked, turning to Snap.

"Yes," and he showed them a certain spot where the timber was easily moved so as to permit the passage of one person at a time.

"That's all right," said Dan.

"Now look here," said Bob; "how are we going to melt snow except in our mouths?"

"Our tin cups," said Dan.

"Oh, I forgot," and Bob smiled at the simplicity of his question.

Snap kept blazing away at every wolf who stuck his nose between the logs of the hut. Bob, Dan, and Mike did the same. They used their hatchets whenever they could, in order to save their ammunition.

Midnight came, and Dan estimated that fully half a hundred wolves had been killed during the evening.

"They'll be frozen hard by morning, though," Bob remarked.

"Yes, but the scalps will be worth a dollar each all the same. It will only be a little harder work to get 'em off, that's all."

At last our heroes concluded that sleep they must have, and so stretched themselves before the fire on their blankets.

The wolves howled and gnawed on the logs with a renewed fierceness when they saw the hunters making themselves comfortable. But little cared our heroes for that. All but Mike soon dropped off to sleep and to dream.

But to Mike the situation was an unpleasant one. To sleep with three or four score of wolves howling within a few feet of him, thirsting for the warm blood in his veins, was an utter impossibility to him.

He lay there in his blanket looking up at the roof of the hut and thinking of the little isle beyond the sea, where he was born, and wondering if he would ever see it again. The wolves and the wind howled in unison, and hour after hour passed with the same pandemonium of sounds ringing in his ears.

Suddenly he turned on his side and tried to sleep. He closed his eyes and made a desperate effort not to think of the unpleasantness of the situation. But it was all in vain. Try hard as he would the howling wolves drove sleep from him.

Looking to the right he saw a pair of gleaming eyes just through the crevice of the logs, gazing upon him. They were reflected by the fire on the hearth, and seemed, therefore, like balls of fire themselves. But Mike could not resist the temptation to gaze at them. They seemed to absorb his entire mental faculties. The more he gazed at them, the more he was fascinated. The gleaming eyes seemed rooted on him. He rose on one elbow and glared like one charmed by some patent spell of enchantment.

Suddenly he turned on hands and knees and gazed. Then he crept forward on all fours, as if irresistibly drawn by some unseen power, his eyes fixed on the gleaming eyes beyond the crevice. His whole frame quivered, and, at times, he halted, as if hesitating, and then moved forward again. Closer and closer to the crevice he crept, till at last his face was within a foot of the logs. Then he hesitated, trembling like a leaf. His eyes and nostrils were distended, and every feature of his face betrayed unspeakable horror. He tried to pull back, to turn aside—to even look away, but all in vain. An irresistible spell was upon him, and he, shivering like one convulsed with an ague, crept forward again till his forehead touched the log!

Just then Dan McCue awoke, having been sleeping soundly for hours, and rose upon his elbow. He saw Mike on hands and knees with his face up against the crevice of the logs. That Mike was trembling like a leaf was plainly perceptible.

"Mike!" he called in a low tone of voice, "what are you after?"

Mike made no reply.

Dan arose softly and stepped forward where he obtained a glimpse of a face.

The look of intense horror on his face alarmed him.

He spoke again.

"Mike! Mike!"

Still he made no reply.

On the other hand the young Irishman pressed his face to the crevice so hard that the wolf was enabled to project his snout through far enough to lick his face. He tried hard to insert his gleaming white fangs, but the crevice was too narrow.

"Great God!" muttered Dan. "The brute has charmed him! I've heard of such things but never believed it till now. Mike! Mike!" he called, and in louder tones.

Still there was no response, and Dan became uneasy. He stepped over to Snap and woke him up.

"Eh—what?" Snap asked, sitting up and rubbing his eyes with his dirty fists.

"Get up!" Dan whispered. "Hanged if a wolf haven't charmed the Irishman!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, rising and glaring around the hut.

The moment his eyes rested on Mike, he sprang to his side and glared down at him.

"Gosh, yes!" he muttered. "Gimme my gun, quick!"

Dan handed him his rifle, and the old man carefully placed the muzzle in the crevice within a few inches of Mike's face.

Dan looked in profound horror.

"Be careful, Snap!" he said.

Snap made no reply.

He made sure of the aim and pulled the trigger.

The keen, whip-like crack of the rifle startled Bob from his sleep, and he sprang up just in time to see Mike roll over on the floor, as though he had been shot through the brain.

CHAPTER XVI.

MIKE RESCUED—THE SIEGE.

Bob sprang to his feet, a look of horror on his face.

"Great God!" he exclaimed; "is Mike killed?"

"Gosh, no!" returned Snap.

"What in thunder is the matter with him, then?"

Snap and Dan were too intently gazing on the pallid face of the unconscious Irishman to answer the question. They were watching the expression on Mike's face.

Bob was amazed.

"Won't you tell me what ails him?" he asked, turning to Dan.

"Yes," and in as few words as possible he explained the affair to him.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Bob. "I would never have believed it!"

"Nor I," said Dan; "but I saw this myself, and Snap shot the wolf. The brute couldn't reach him with his teeth and was licking his face. I never want to see another case like it."

Mike lay like one in a stupor for upwards of ten minutes. Then he appeared to be coming to himself, like one just recovering from a swoon.

"Let's lie down in our blankets, and pretend to be sleeping," suggested Dan, "and see what he will do."

They did so, and as they rolled themselves snugly in their blankets they kept their eyes on him.

He rolled over on his side, tried to rise, and stopped at a sitting posture. Only the howling or barking of a few wolves outside broke the stillness of the hour. Dan, Bob, and Snap appeared to be soundly sleeping. He looked vaguely around the hut, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. Then he made a rapid motion with his hand before his eyes, as though hastily brushing something away from before him.

Suddenly he looked all around, as if conscious that some kind of danger menaced him. A look of blank fear came over his face, and he sprang to his feet, seized his musket, ran it through a crevice of the logs, and pulled the trigger.

The explosion was terrific.

Loaded heavily, the musket flew out of his hands and struck the wall on the opposite side of the hut. Luckily it did not strike either of the other three or the consequences would have been serious.

Instantly Dan, Bob, and Snap sprang up and stared at him.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap. "What's busted?"

"Wolves! Wolves!" yelled Mike, greatly excited.

"Well, they have been around all night," said Dan. "What put it into your head to get up and shoot at 'em with your old kicking cannon? Just to wake us?"

"Begorra," said Mike, looking as blank as a sheet of unwritten paper, "I must have dreamed it."

"Dreamed what? What did you dream?"

"Sure, an' didn't I drame the bloody baste was atin' me aloive?"

"The deuce you did! Do you mean to say you got up in your sleep and fired at 'em?"

"Yis, I believe I did."

"Then we'll have to tie you when you lie down at night, for fear you will get up in your sleep and kill us."

"Och, now, is it a wolf yez are, Mr. Dan?"

"No, but how can you tell me from a wolf when you are asleep?"

Mike looked around at his festive old musket, and scratched his head. He could make no reply.

Just then the wolves broke loose anew. The tremendous report of the musket had quieted

them for a few minutes. Then the whole pack opened again with tenfold fury.

On the north side of the hut the snow had banked up to the roof. The ravenous brutes lost no time in getting up there. Mike heard them scratching the snow away till their claws struck the timbers.

"By the piper of Armagh!" he cried, "the wild bastes are afther coming through the roof!"

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, "they can't come through."

"Bedad, they'll ate up the house!"

"Not much," said Dan, smiling confidently. "They can't git at us."

Snap saw through the crevices of the logs that day was dawning. He was an early riser from habit, and at once prepared to cook a breakfast of venison steak, of which they now had an abundance. The fire had burned down to a heap of glowing coals, just right for broiling.

As steak after steak was placed on the coals, the savory odor of the cooking set the wolves crazy. They had never howled and yelped as then.

"Git yer guns," said Snap to Dan and Bob, "an' lay out some more sculps."

They did so, and soon the keen whip-like crack of their rifles was heard, laying out a wolf at each shot.

"By the great elk!" exclaimed Dan, as he peered through the crevice, "every blessed wolf we killed last night has been snowed under."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap. "That's so. We'll git 'em in the spring."

"What's the use of killing them now if we can't git their scalps?" Bob asked.

"Cause we can find 'em in the spring," said Snap.

The snow had ceased falling. But as it had been falling all night it was very deep—too deep for our heroes to undertake to travel through it.

"By gum!" muttered the old hunter as he peered through on the south side of the hut, "we're snowed in, sure pop."

"Phat's that?" Mike asked, turning white as a sheet.

"Snowed in," repeated Bob for his benefit.

He peeped through at the snow beyond.

"Begob!" he said, "av yez drive thim wolves away it's divil a bit I care for that snow."

"Gosh!" grunted Snap. "He's a fool. The snow is worse than the wolves."

The sun rose in a cloudless sky, but it had no warmth in its rays.

Having broiled enough steaks for breakfast Snap called all hands to eat. They all ate heartily with a score of wolf snouts protruding through the crevices of the logs snuffing the odor of the steaks. Even on top of the hut the ravenous brutes were howling and scratching away the snow.

"Badad, it's a foine place we are in," remarked Mike. "Phat'll we do whin the mate is all gone?"

"Eat wolf," replied Dan.

Mike was horrified.

The wolves suddenly ceased howling and began to slink away with their tails between their legs, as though some terrible enemy had put in an appearance.

"Begorra!" exclaimed Mike, "av ye say ye'll ate thim they'll all run away!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW ENEMY.—SAUTENE AGAIN.

THE sudden silence of the wolves caused no little astonishment to our heroes in the hut. They knew not how to account for it except that some enemy the wolves greatly feared was approaching. But what kind of an enemy it was they were by no means certain. It might be panthers, whom the wolves very much feared; and then it might be Indians, before whom the wolves always retired, unless they outnumbered the red-skins ten to one.

From three sides of the hut the Wolf Boys could see clear out to the forest. On the north side the snow had drifted till it was banked up to the roof. Of course they could not look in that direction.

In five minutes not a wolf was in sight.

They had slunk away like so many whipped spaniels, and were heard no more that morning.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, looking around on three sides for the cause of such a sudden and silent retreat of the wolves. "What's up? Them wolves ain't runnin' from ther shadders."

"I don't see anything," remarked Bob Stewart.

"Nor I," added Dan McCue.

"There may be something out on the north side," said Bob. "We can't look out on that side, you know."

"I'll take a peep an' see," remarked Snap, looking up at the roof at the spot where he had

previously shown the Wolf Boys how to move a certain piece of timber. "Gimme a lift an' I'll go through."

Bob and Dan raised him on their shoulders and held him close up under the roof. He tried to move the timber and found that a very heavy pile of snow rested on it. The wolves had not scratched any snow away from that particular spot.

He was attempting to move the timber when he was conscious that a heavy body of some kind had just stepped upon it.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed in an undertone. "Somebody is up thar!"

"Thunder! Is that so?" Bob asked.

"How do you know?" Dan asked.

"Felt him step on this ere timber," was the positive reply of the old man.

"Better get down then," suggested Dan, "and wait to see what turns up. They may be Indians."

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Mike, turning pale as a sheet, and looking helplessly around.

"Have you loaded your musket again, Mike?" Dan asked.

"No," and he ran for it where it had rebounded at the last discharge. He lost no time in placing another heavy charge of powder and buckshot in it.

"Is the bayonet all right?" Bob asked, seeing how earnest he was in the business.

"Yis, begorra," he replied.

"Be ready, then, but don't shoot until Snap does."

Of course no one knew who or what was on the house, and Bob had questioned Mike merely for his own amusement.

Suddenly a huge ball of snow rolled down the chimney into the fire. It was as large as a peck measure, and lodged on the top of the two logs which Snap had thrown on a little while after eating breakfast, and began to rapidly melt under the influence of fervid heat.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, as he gazed at the ball of snow. "Injuns."

"Howly mither av—"

"Hush-sh!" cautioned Dan. "Keep quiet and wait till Snap says for us to shoot."

"Watch at that end, Bob," Snap whispered to Bob and motioning toward the side of the house in which the door was placed.

Bob promptly took his stand by the door, rifle in hand, and peered through the crevices in all directions in front of him. Dan took his stand at the opposite end from the fire-place.

"Take that side," said Snap to Mike, nodding towards the north side on which the snow was banked to the roof.

Mike took his stand, as if he had the most important post of all.

"Is it shoot, Mr. Snap, av I see a red-skin?" he asked, with an earnestness that caused both Dan and Bob to snicker.

"Gosh, yes," said Snap, "an' hold yer jaw!"

Dan and Bob, knowing how the snow was banked against the north side of the hut, kept chuckling at the alertness displayed by Mike in watching it.

By and by another fall of snow came down the chimney into the fire. It soon melted and the water steamed and sputtered as it ran down through the burning coals.

"Gosh," muttered Snap. "I must make a big fire, or they'll put it out."

He was not slow to act.

In another minute he had thrown three more dry logs on the fire. They soon caught and burned briskly. Then he knew the fire was safe from danger from the snow.

Several more balls came down, but they melted away without doing any more harm than putting out the fire at a certain spot.

Then they ceased falling, and quiet reigned for nearly an hour.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAUTENE AND HIS INDIAN ALLIES ON THE WARPATH.

SUDDENLY Mike became interested in a little sound that seemed to come from the huge bank of snow in front of him. He cocked his ear to that part of the crevice whence it seemed to come and listened for a moment or two. What he heard excited him to wondrous activity. Without a word from the others he seized his musket, ran it through the crevice, and plunged the bayonet some three feet or more into the snow-bank. He felt it strike something soft and yielding. Something struggled as if impaled by it. That was enough. He cocked the gun and pulled the trigger. A tremendous explosion followed, and Mike and his gun tumbled in a heap together on the opposite side of the room.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, wheeling around

and glaring at Mike trying to pull himself together again.

The next moment a series of savage yells were heard outside in the snowbank.

"Indians! Indians!" exclaimed Dan.

"Keep still," said Snap.

The old man put his ear to the crevice and listened.

The hole made by the musket through the snow enabled him to both hear and see. He heard voices that succeeded the yells. He looked and saw several savages. Quick as thought he took aim and fired.

Another yell followed.

Snap snatched Bob's rifle and fired again.

A yell answered him.

Dan ran up and peered through the hole. He saw a figure retreating through the patch cut in the snow and quickly fired.

A yell told him he had hit his mark.

Mike and Bob quickly reloaded their pieces.

"Begorra," said Mike, "he wur comin' through wid his Thomas hawk till I give'im me bogonet."

"And a pound of lead," said Bob, "you must have tore him all to pieces, Mike."

"Sure an its a bod man I am wid the Injuns," said he, swelling with pride over his exploit.

THE reader will recollect that the Wolf Boys left Louis Sautene, the French Canadian, and an Indian tied to a tree, in revenge for similar treatment Dan and Bob had received at their hands. It will also be remembered that Mike had killed one of the Indians in a fit of terror, and that the musket kicked him out of the tree into a bank of snow, and while he was there the third Indian took to his heels and escaped.

The Frenchman and his ally were securely bound. It was impossible for them to extricate themselves. Dan did not intend for them to escape. Sautene and the savages did not intend that Robert and Dan should escape, either, but they did.

The Indian who escaped made his way northward as fast as he could. He saw that it was all up with Sautene and the others. They could not escape the wolf hunters, he thought, and so concluded to return home as quickly as possible.

He traveled several miles, and then had the good fortune to meet nearly a score of his tribe moving southward in quest of game.

He told them of the fate of his comrades. The savages uttered fierce yells of vengeance, and forced him to return with them to the place where he had left Sautene and the Wolf Boys.

It was nearly sunset when they reached the spot. They were astounded at finding Sautene and the red-skin alive and tied to the tree. Not a single wolf had been near them, a fact which shows how well the Evil One takes care of his own.

Of course the prisoners were promptly released, and Sautene swore tremendous oaths of vengeance against the Wolf Boys.

There would be no difficulty in catching up with our heroes, he thought, for their trail was plainly visible in the snow.

He inflamed the passions of the savages still more by lying statements, and then started off in pursuit.

Night came on, however, and with it a heavy snow storm. They were compelled to stop and seek shelter in a dense part of the woods, where they built an immense fire and wrapped themselves in their blankets.

Indians seldom go abroad in such weather. This storm had caught them quite unexpectedly. The hard crust on the first fall of snow had tempted them out in search of deer and other game.

The storm raged all night and they had a hard time of it. But they were inured to such hardships and did not mind it very much. But the blood-thirsty Sautene was in a towering rage because the storm had obliterated the trail of the Wolf Boys. He swore in French and in choice aborigine, but it did no good.

"They went down the river," he said to Red Fox, the Indian chief. "If we follow the river, we may come across them."

"Yes," said Red Fox, "we will follow the river."

They started down the river as soon as it was daylight. They had their snow shoes with them which enabled them to travel very easily over the deepest snow.

Ere they had gone a mile they heard a rifle shot and the howling of wolves.

"Sacre! They are in the hut over the river!" exclaimed Sautene.

He remembered the hut.

He had been there several times and spent two nights there once when hard pressed by wolves.

When it grew lighter they saw the smoke that ascended from the hut.

"They are there!" hissed Sautene. "I'll roast or freeze 'em out. Sacre! I'll hang 'em to icicles!"

They approached the hut on the side the snow had banked against, and saw the wolves slink away. As the occupants could not see them on that side, they approached with impunity even to the extent of going up on top of the hut.

Their first effort was to put out the fire by dropping huge balls of snow down the chimney. Failing in that they resolved to cautiously cut their way through the soft snow to the side of the hut and pour a volley into them.

The reader has seen how Mike Reagan spoiled their game with his musket and bayonet, and laid a red-skin out in the snow whence he was never to rise again. Three other rifles rang out in quick succession, and as many red-skins fell to rise no more.

They beat a hasty retreat.

Four of their number had fallen, and they could not return the fire except to shoot into the snow-bank and risk the chance of doing execution.

Sautene retreated down to the river where the trees sheltered them. Red Fox was in a towering rage. Four of his warriors were dead and a fifth one of the tribe was lying stiff in the snow where Mike's musket had laid him the day before.

Sautene was as much enraged as the chief.

"We must wait for night," said he to the chief.

"The darkness will protect us and their fire betray them."

"The pale-faces are not fools," said the chief.

"They will make no fire at night. They are wise as serpents."

Sautene wondered if Snap would be fool enough to make a fire in the hut after dark. He very much doubted that he would and tried to think of some way to dislodge him and the Wolf Boys. He well knew that Snap was as expert at fighting red-skins as in wolf hunting, and that he was a dangerous customer in any event.

At last they concluded, rather than stay around there all day, to make one more effort to get to the hut on the side covered by the snow.

Four of their comrades were lying dead in the snow, a fact that made them thirst all the more for the blood of the Wolf Boys.

Under the guidance of Red Fox, they commenced traveling under the snow again which, as it was soft, presented but little obstacle to their progress.

In the meantime, four Indians were stationed in a conspicuous place to shoot down the wolf hunters if they attempted to leave the hut.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SINGULAR CASE OF SNEEZING.

THE silence of the Indians gave Snap food for thought. He knew their ways and methods, and began to study up what he would do under the circumstances were the positions reversed.

"They are up ter some devilment," he said, "an' we hev got ter be spy ter sarcumvent 'um."

"What do you think they will try to do next, Snap?" Dan McCue asked.

"I dunno. Mebbe they'll try ter come under the snow agin."

"Begorra, av they do the blaggards'll have me bagonet in 'em!" said Mike.

"We must keep up a close watch on all sides," said Bob. "Mike and I will take care of this side and Snap and Dan can take the others."

Mike was nervous all over, and it was plain that now it was certain on which the danger was, he was not to be relied on. But for fear of being laughed at he did not dare utter a word of dissent.

Hours passed and a profound silence reigned.

Suddenly Bob thought he could hear a slight noise under the snow in front of his position. He listened patiently and then motioned to Snap to do likewise. Snap came to his side and applied his ear to the crevice of the logs. He too, could hear the dull lapping noise made by the loma-hawks, and prepared to give the red-skins a reception they would not soon forget.

Mike wanted to run his bayonet through the snow and thus ascertain the locality of the enemy.

"No," said Snap, "wait. We'll see 'em in a minute or two, an' then—"

"They'll see us too," Mike added, interrupting him.

"Gosh, no!" replied Snap. "We'll kill 'em before they see us."

They waited five minutes longer, and then saw the snow beginning to move in front of the logs.

"Ready," whispered Snap.

Four muzzles of guns protruded through the crevice.

A brawny hand came through the crevice.

A wolf knife in Snap's hand instantly pinned it to the log.

A yell came from the savage.

The next instant the musket and three rifles belched forth their contents into the snow.

The musket rebounded across the room with a tremendous racket, leaving Mike unarmed for the moment. But it had done its work. A red-skin had received the whole charge of buckshot in his heart, and sank down in the snow to rise no more.

The other three killed two and wounded a third.

A few shots were returned by the red-skins. Their bullets lodged in the logs of the hut. The others then retreated with yells of defiance.

Ere the Wolf Boys could reload their pieces the red-skins were out of range and sight.

The savage whose hand had been pinned to the log by Snap's big wolf knife remained a prisoner. He couldn't get away. The knife held him fast.

"Gosh darn yer hide!" hissed Snap as he saw how he had the savage. "What's yer doin' hyar, yer sneakin' cuss?"

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Injun go way if pale-face let go hand."

"Of course you will. So would I. In a bad fix, ain't yer, red-skin? Yer would be mighty glad ter git away, eh? Hanged ef I don't let yer die thar, yer coppery son of a skunk!"

"Pale-face heap talk," said the savage.

"Heap shoot too, ain't he?" replied Snap. "I think thar's seven of your band lying out thar. Nobody is hurt in hyar. Why don't you fellers shoot somebody?"

"Ugh! Injun go away now?" said the red-skin.

"Of course yer will. The last one of you will go to the Happy Hunting Ground."

"Yis, begorra! Let me stick me bagonet in the blaggard," said Mike, coming bravely forward with his reloaded musket in his hands.

"Gosh!" hissed Snap. "Keep still, won't you?"

"Yis—I'm still, bedad," said Mike, stepping back, for he did not care to anger the old hunter.

"What shall we do with him, Snap?" Dan asked after a pause of several minutes. "We don't want any prisoners, and we don't want to kill a man after capturing him."

"Gosh, no!" replied Snap, who was doing some deep thinking.

Suddenly a thought struck him, upon which he at once proceeded to act. He took from his pocket a small bottle of cayenne pepper and uncorked it. Pouring some of it out in the palm of his left hand, he clapped his right over the red-skin's mouth, running both arms through the crevice. Then he held the pepper to the savage's nose. In an instant it was snuffed up by the proboscis.

There was a sneeze and a howl.

"That gits 'im," said old Snap, drawing the knife away that held him prisoner. "He is no good any more."

Finding himself released, the red-skin sprang to his feet and ran like a deer. Suddenly he sneezed again, and the convulsion threw him a complete somersault in the snow. He rolled over and over, howling and sneezing like all possessed. His companions did not know what to think of him.

"Ugh!" grunted Red Fox, as he watched his antics.

The wretch would rise to his feet occasionally and run toward his companions. But convulsive sneezing would throw him into a violent paroxysm, during which he would turn complete somersaults.

His actions were so very strange that when he reached his comrades they stood aloof from him. He seemed so completely crazed that they shook their heads and made motions to each other that said the Great Spirit had touched him.

Indians are so superstitious about demented people, that they will not touch one or strike one under any circumstances.

But this one leapt and howled, rolled and sneezed, and acted so violently in his agony, that Red Fox and his braves came to the conclusion that the Great Spirit had taken sides with the Wolf Boys, and that it was useless for them to fight them any longer.

"Ugh!" grunted Red Fox. "Great Spirit angry with the red men. Red Fox will go away!"

The chief turned away and started across the river on the ice, followed by his band.

"Sacre!" yelled Sautene, "Red Fox is one grand coward; he is afraid of the pale-face. Sacre! Come back and fight like ze brave!"

Red Fox made no reply but kept on direct

down the river, leaving Sautene and the sneezing savage alone together.

Snap heard Sautene's words, and at once hurried to the river. He pushed aside the pile of movable timber and thrust his head up through the snow. From that elevation he could see the Indians crossing the river and Sautene gazing at the sneezing savage in dumbfounded amazement.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WOLF BAIT.

Snap gazed at the Frenchman for a minute or two, noting his amazement or consternation, and then burst out into a regular horse laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha, Monsieur Sautene!" he cried. "What's the matter with yer red-skin friends?" "Sacre! Diable!" roared Sautene. "I rill your head off!"

He raised his rifle and aimed at Snap.

Snap dropped down in the snow and the ball passed harmlessly over his head.

Up he sprang again, rifle in hand, and cried out sternly:

"Up with your hands!"

"Mon Dieu!" gasped Sautene, throwing up both hands.

He was at least twenty feet from any tree. To attempt to dodge towards one would cause Snap to fire. He knew that Snap never missed what he shot at.

"Come this way," commanded Snap.

Sautene hesitated.

Snap rose to his feet and took deliberate aim at the wretch.

"Come!" he hissed.

"Sacre—yes!" replied the terrified Frenchman, advancing toward the wolf hunter.

In the meantime Dan, Bob and Mike hastily climbed through the roof and confronted the situation.

"By George, we've got 'im!" exclaimed Dan, almost beside himself with joy.

The Indians were seen speeding away over the snow on the other side of the river. With their snow shoes they could make good time over the deepest snow.

"Whoo!" yelled Mike, in a triumphant tone. "The blaggards are running away."

The savages did not even look back. They were under the impression that the Great Spirit was angry with them, and had "touched" one of their number.

"Goin' git 'im," said Snap to Dan and Bob as he kept Sautene covered with his trusty rifle.

"Yes—come on, Bob!" and Dan led the way toward the merciless wretch.

"Hello, Sautene!" exclaimed Dan, as he approached the Frenchman. "How did you get loose from the tree?"

"Sacre! The red canaille are cowards!"

"Of course they are!" replied Dan. "You would not have been one of their gang had they been otherwise."

He made no reply, but quietly submitted to be bound by the two Wolf Boys. When they had secured him they led him round to the other side of the hut, waist deep in snow, and entered it. Snap returned by way of the roof, and met them as they came in.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed, as he met his old enemy face to face again. "Yer didn't git enough, eh? Had to come agin, eh? Gosh darn it all, yer're the biggest fool that ever lived. I'm done with yer. Them boys kin do as they please with yer."

"They won't dare murder me," said the wretch.

"On no, we never did intend to do that. We never intended to do any more to you than you intended to do to us. You're only fit for wolf meat. We'll tie you up again, and let the wolves have another chance at you."

Dan was the speaker.

He well knew that he and his comrades would never have escaped alive if they had fallen into the hands of the wretch and his Indian allies.

"Yes," said Bob. "Tie him up again, and let the wolves have him. I wouldn't be guilty of wasting a bullet on such a wretch."

"Come on then," Dan replied, leading him out of the hut.

Bob followed.

Mike and Snap remained behind.

"Let's tie him to that tree over there," said Bob, pointing to a tree that stood directly in front of the hut, about one hundred yards away. "We can see him from there, and he'll be too far to prevent any Indians from rescuing him."

"Hanged if that isn't just the thing!" exclaimed Dan. "Come on. We'll tie him there."

They led him to the tree and tied him there, just as he and the Indians had served them.

Then they came away, followed by the curses of the doomed Frenchman.

From the hut they could have a fair view of him as he swung and froed in the wind.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, a grin on his swarthy face. "We kin use 'im for bait."

"That's so," put in Bob, "and let the wolves have him at night when we can't see him. Somehow I don't want that wretch to escape, and yet I am not willing to shoot him except in a fair fight."

"That's just how I feel about it," said Dan. "I'll never shoot a prisoner under any circumstances if I can help myself."

"Bedad!" said Mike, who had been gazing at the wretch through a crevice. "It's could for the loikes av him out there, I'm thinking."

"So it is. But it would have been colder for us if we had fallen into his hands."

"Gosh, yes," added Snap. "He ain't worth a wolf scalp."

"There comes two wolves now, by George!" exclaimed Bob.

"Hang me if they ain't making for him!" cried Dan.

All four appeared excited for a minute or two, as they watched the movements of the two lank, hungry wolves made their way toward the tree on which he was hanging.

"Sacre! Sacre! Help! Help!" yelled Sautene, as the two wolves showed their fangs and began to spring up at him.

Crack! went Snap's rifle, and down went one of the wolves.

Crack! went Dan's, and the other wolf tumbled over.

"I'll git ther sculps," said Snap, putting down his rifle, and running out to the tree, he secured the scalps even before the victims had ceased kicking.

"Monsieur Schnaps," said Sautene, "I vill make ze grand pardon. I will make ze amende honorable, and be ze very great friend—"

"Of course you will! Hang yerself up for wolf bait," replied Snap, securing the scalps and starting back to the hut with them. Curses both loud and deep followed him, but little he cared for that.

All day long they stood on guard watching for wolves, and many a scalp did they get before the sun went down.

As darkness came on the wolves came in greater numbers, and the firing became more brisk.

At last it became so dark that there was trouble in distinguishing Sautene from the wolves. He swung to and fro, yelling and swearing like a pirate.

"One more shot," said Dan, and then we'll leave him to his fate."

Taking deliberate aim, he fired. There came a frantic yell, several fierce howls, and then silence fell upon the scene.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW WAY TO CATCH OLD GAME.

THE yell and howls that followed Dan McCue's shot were not unexpected; the Wolf Boys knew that ere the merciless wretch was torn to pieces by the still more merciless wolves, he would continue. Any one would do so under the circumstances. But the silence of both man and wolves that almost immediately followed was not expected. They believed that he would be devoured before morning. In fact, they expected him to be, and desired it. Yet they could not account for the strange silence that followed.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, as he listened to the snarling of wolves eating—no howls or barking. "They must hev got 'im down mighty quick."

"Hanged if I don't believe it's all over with him," Bob remarked.

"I hope it is," added Dan. "He was the meanest wretch I ever heard of."

"Gosh, yes," Snap assented, "if yer knowed 'im as I did yer would say more."

"Tell us something about him, Snap," said Bob.

"Yes," put in Dan. "I'll broil the steaks while you do so," and he proceeded to cut several liberal slices of steak from the hind-quarter of the deer they had shot the day before.

Snap then began, in a snappy, sententious way, to relate all he knew of Louis Sautene, who, he said, was a fugitive from justice. He had taken up his abode among the Indians and married an Indian woman. Cruel as the red-skins were, Sautene was even worse. There was no crime too heinous for him to commit. He had captured two white girls and sold them to Indian chiefs, after murdering their relatives. He once got Snap into a scrape with the Indians, and then left him to his fate. Snap escaped finally, and had thirsted for revenge ever since.

During the recital of Snap's story of the Frenchman, Dan was busy broiling the steaks. The savagery of the cooking was the wolves outside, and they crowded Dan's hut, snuffing, snorting, howling and trying to endeavoring to gnaw away the logs that shut them out.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap. "They hev eat 'im up, an' now want something better."

"Hanged if I haven't a mind to give 'em a broiled steak, just to let 'em get the bad taste out of their mouths."

Snap chuckled.

Bob laughed.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Mike, "stick on me a bagonet an' let 'em ate it. It's a nice fork, I'm sure."

"Here it is," said Dan, "smoking hot."

Mike held his musket for him, and Dan stuck the steak on the point of the bayonet. Then he thrust it through a crevice. A huge wolf seized it and had the bayonet rammed its whole head down his throat.

"Begorra!" chuckled Mike, "he swallowed the bagonet too, the ould glutton!"

The wolf pulled away, bearing the steak in his capacious jaws. But he had received his death-wound with it.

"He won't want any more hot steak, I'm thinking," remarked Bob.

"No—not handed out on that kind of a fork," Dan added.

"Gosh, no," Snap said, "but I do. I'm hungry."

"Here's your steak."

They fell to and did ample justice to the piece of steaks Dan had broiled.

While they were eating their supper the howling of the wolves increased. More of them came from afar, attracted by the howling, as well as the odor of the cooked meat. A wolf can find fresh meat or blood a long way off.

"Now, for more sculps," said Snap, taking his hatchet and going to one of the crevices. He commenced cutting away on one of the logs for the purpose of making the crevice large enough to enable a wolf to put his head through to his shoulders.

Dan and Bob saw his object at once, and began to cut another one for themselves.

In a few minutes they had two holes cut, or rather two places where the crevice was enlarged sufficient for a wolf to run his head through.

Snap had not finished his more than a minute or so, when a huge wolf ran his head through and made a vicious snap at his leg.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, dodging the wolf's crushing blow on the head with his hatchet, striking him instantly.

"That will save a bullet and a charge of powder," remarked Dan.

"Gosh, yes! Wish we could get there, though."

Just then another wolf stuck his head through the hole. Mike was standing by with his musket in his hands. He thrust the bayonet through the brute's neck and pinned him there.

"Bedad!" he exclaimed, "it's got ye I say, Mr. Wolf, ye blaggard!"

The wolf howled and squirmed, but the bayonet held him fast.

"Hanged if we can't get the sculps that way!" cried Dan, drawing his knife and scalping the wolf in a jiffy.

"Gosh, yes!" assented Snap. "Let 'em go, Mike."

Mike jerked the bayonet away, and the wolf turned away minus his scalp. He was no longer a wolf from that moment, and, no doubt, lost all interest in the proceedings.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, as he stood by the fresh scalp in Dan's hand. "No use in letting 'em freeze. Ketch 'em, Mike."

"Sure an' I will," replied Mike, taking a position for the next one.

In a few moments another wolf ran his head through the hole, and Mike instantly pinned him. Snap relieved him of his scalp in a few minutes. With a heavy sigh he turned the wolf's neck, and pinning his head to the log, he was less to turn his head to Snap in a few minutes' scalp.

"Let 'im go," said Snap as he took off the third scalp.

Mike released him, and the poor brute fell among his companions in a condition that made him an easy victim to the voracious hordes around him.

"I say, Snap," said Dan, "let's hold a piece of venison near the hole to tempt them."

"Yes—jes so," Snap replied.

Dan cut a piece from the carcass of the first and held it near the hole. Instantly another wolf protruded, and Mike pinned it. Snap cut the scalp, and the whining victim was released.

"Here's a new way to catch old game," said Snap, looking at the expression on the face of the old man. "Lost his scalp."

"Gosh, yes," grunted Snap, jerking another one. "The mighty good one it is," said Dan. "The scalp fresh and kicking. It beats the scalp."

"Gosh, yes," grunted Snap, jerking another one. "The head that came through the hole."

They kept up the work till a very late hour, doing a pile of scalps. Then they grew tired of the bloody work and prepared to lie down in their blankets and get some sleep.

"I say, Snap," Dan whispered to the old man, "what shall we do with Mike? If he's harmed again some wolf will run his head through one of these holes and eat his face off."

Snap scratched his head and looked puzzled. He stared round at the young Irishman, who was seated on one of the logs before the fire, and whispered:

"He'll eat agin it."

"Yes, that'll do," assented Dan, and forthwith they both proceeded to roll a couple of logs against the wall on that side of the hut, to the surprise of Mike and Bob.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MYSTERY OF SAUTENE.

"HELLO!" exclaimed Bob, "what's that for?"

"To keep wolves out," said Dan.

"Thunder! A wolf can't come through that hole!"

"Well, a little one can," suggested Dan, laughing heartily, but Mike agreed with Snap that it was best to stop up the hole.

"Badad, a snake might be afther coming in to eat us," he said.

"I give it up," said Bob, when the laughter had subsided. "Plug the holes so the lizards can't even squeeze through."

"No mosquitoes," Dan suggested.

They arranged the logs satisfactorily, and then they lay down in their blankets, before the fire.

Having lost considerable sleep, since starting out on the hunt, all four were in a condition to sleep soundly. They fell asleep, and slept all through the night, the howling of the few wolves who still wore their scalps having no effect on them.

Snap was the first man to wake in the morning. It was well on to daylight when he got up and looked through the crevices of the log hut.

A few wolves had slept in a heap to keep warm on the south side of the hut. They had feasted on the other wolves who had either been killed or lost their scalps.

The moment they heard him moving about inside they set up a howl all together. That caused Dan, Bob and Mike to spring up, having slept well during the night.

"What's the matter?" Dan asked.

"Wolves," said Snap.

"Is that all? Where's the Frenchman?"

Snap peered through the crevice. Through the day dawn he could see the tree on which the Frenchman was hanging at sunset, and saw a piece of the deer-skin thong suspended from the tree, but nothing of the wretch.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "He's gone!"

"Gone?"

Bob, Dan and Mike at once sprang to their feet and looked to the crevice. They, too, saw only the thong.

"They've eat him up," said Bob.

"Can't they have," corroborated Mike.

"Of course," asserted Dan. "They tore him down as soon as it was too dark for us to interfere with them."

"Gosh, yes," grunted Snap. "Let's hev some breakfast."

They tended up the fire, and then proceeded to broil several large slices of venison. The odor of the broiling meat was intoxicating to the wolves. They numbered about a dozen, but they yelped and barked mad, thrusting their heads through the holes, from which the logs had been removed.

Our heroes were in no hurry, however. They ate their breakfast very leisurely, and then proceeded to business.

The old game of the evening before was repeated, and in a few minutes a half dozen ravenous brutes had lost their scalps, as well as received death wounds from Mike's bayonet.

"Let's scalp a few without the bayonet!" suggested Dan.

"No," said Mike, "it's not meself as will scalp 'em, but I'll hould 'em for ye."

"We can catch 'em with a noose."

"Good!" cried Bob. "We can see if they will act."

"Gosh, yes."

Dan made a noose with a strong deer-skin thong, and held it over the hole, whilst Bob tempted a wolf to his fate by holding a piece of raw venison close to it.

Quick as a flash a wolf thrust his head through the hole, and snapped eagerly at the meat. Dan jerked the thong, and the noose caught him round the neck as firmly as ever a sheriff did his victim.

The brute pulled and struggled with all his might, and so did Dan.

"Get his scalp, Snap!" Dan cried, as he held tightly to the thong.

Snap whirled his knife quickly around the wolf's ears and across his head. Then, by a sudden jerk, he wrenched away the scalp.

Dan then let the wolf go. He jerked his head out and gave a despairing howl that would have melted the heart of any but a fierce wolf-hater.

The next moment a whine of agony escaped him, and dropping his tail between his legs, he made for the woods, the worst-whipped wolf ever seen in Michigan.

Dan, Bob and the others laughed heartily, and proceeded to catch another, which they served in the same way.

That one, however, maddened with pain, sprang upon another wolf, and a death struggle ensued. The entire pack joined in, each brute getting worse as he got a taste of blood. They tore each other to pieces and ate like the ravenous brutes they are.

"Hang it if it isn't a free fight all round," remarked Dan.

"Yes," Bob replied, "and it's all right if they will only leave their scalps behind."

In ten minutes there were only three wolves left behind alive. They were instantly shot. Then our heroes gathered the scalps, and several more that had not quite frozen.

"Now let's go out to that tree and see what became of Sautene."

"Yes—come on," and Snap led the way toward the tree, followed by the others.

On reaching it they glanced around in search of human bones. Wolf bones they found in abundance, where the ravenous brutes had devoured each one of their number that had been shot. But not a bone belonging to the human body could they find; not even a piece of clothing, or shoe, or anything.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Snap. "They swallowed 'im whole!"

Bob and Dan were amazed.

Snap examined the thong, which was still hanging from the limb.

"Cut by a bullet, by gosh!" he ejaculated.

"Eh! what's that?"

"Cut by a bullet," he repeated.

Dan examined the rope, or thong, and came to the same conclusion.

"But where is he?"

"Gosh, yes—whar is he?" and they again sought for his bones, or portions of his dress, but nothing could they find.

Then they sought for evidences of flight through the snow. There, too, they were balked, for the wind had kept fine particles of snow flying all night long, causing a heavy drift in every direction.

"Hanged if this doesn't puzzle me clean through," said Dan.

"Me, too," added Bob. "I can't understand it."

"Gosh, no," Snap jerkily remarked, turning back towards the hut.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FRENCHMAN'S ESCAPE.

THE reader will doubtless recollect the last shot Dan McCue fired at the wolves, who were yelping and howling at the feet of Louis Sautene tied to the tree near the hut. When he fired he could scarcely see anything more than certain dark objects moving about over the white snow. Aiming at a dark object, therefore, was an uncertain aim. It is no wonder, then, that his bullet struck the head of an old wolf in such a manner as to cause it to glance upward and cut the cord that bound Sautene!

The bullet stunned the old wolf so completely and caused his blood to flow so freely that the others instantly sprang upon him and commenced tearing him to pieces. At the same time Sautene began to whirl round and round, getting nearer the ground at each revolution.

Finding himself going down among the ravenous brutes, Sautene uttered a wild despairing yell. Fortunately for him, the wolves were, at the moment, so busy devouring one of their

number that they did not see him, or it would have been all over with him a minute later.

When he reached the ground he found himself free from his bonds. With an exclamation of joy he sprang to the tree again and climbed back up among the branches as fast as he could.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "It was a narrow escape. I will not be eaten to-night. They will go away, and so will I. Ha! Monsieur Schnaps! I will live to pay you the grand debt. And the young *gentilhomme*. By gare! I will have the grand revenge!"

When the wolves had torn the wounded one to pieces, they turned to the tree again. To their surprise, the game was so high up in the tree that they did not even make a leap in that direction.

Just then the odor of the broiling venison steaks in the hut set the wolves to snuffing the air in that direction. They made a break for the hut, and in a few minutes were howling around it.

"Sacre! how hungry I am," said Sautene, in his native tongue. "Those steaks make a great famine in my stomach. But I can't stay here. The wolves may come back. If Schnaps finds me here in the morning he will tie me up again. I will go away. If the wolves come after me I will climb another tree farther away."

He slid down the tree and moved swiftly away over the snow in an easterly direction. To get as far away from that dangerous vicinity was the grand motive power that guided him.

Once, a couple of miles away, near the banks of the frozen river, he met a huge wolf who was making his way toward the hut, guided by the sound of some other wolves howling. He was unarmed. Had nothing, not even a little pocket knife, with which to defend himself.

Under these circumstances he promptly took to a tree. Being a good climber, he soon gained the lower branches, and seated himself on one, content to wait for the wolf to leave.

"Diab!e!" he said. "I can live as long without food as you, Monsieur Wolf."

The wolf looked wistfully up at him. He was hungry, very hungry, and, as the man didn't seem to be in any hurry to come down and give him a dinner, he concluded to go on to where he heard a whole pack of his tribe howling, as if something good to eat was near by.

So Sautene was soon able to descend from the tree and resume his weary tramp through the deep snow. He kept along the river bank, knowing he would reach the settlements that way, and there manage to get something to eat, and maybe some kind of arms, by which to defend himself on his way back to his home among the redskins.

All night long he tramped, tired, cold, and hungry. Morning came, and still he was miles away from the nearest settlement. But he kept on. In that intense cold, to stop was to freeze. To go on was to keep blood in circulation, and hope and courage in his heart.

At last, late in the afternoon, he reached the settlement. The first house he struck was that of the widow McCue. She and Nora were sitting by the fire, sewing and knitting, when a rap on the front door startled them.

Nora went to the door, and was surprised at seeing a stalwart stranger there.

"Mademoiselle," said Sautene, "I am hungry, tired, and sleepy. I've walked fifty miles through the snow to escape the Indians, who took my arms from me. I—"

"Come in, sir, come in to the fire!" cried Mrs. McCue, on hearing what he said.

"Ah, thanks, madame!" and he stalked into the cozy home of the widow, and stood by the warm fire on the hearth.

Mrs. McCue could well see that he had traveled far through the deep snow. She would have known as much without his saying so.

"Nora, child," she said to her pretty daughter, "get something to eat at once. I know you are hungry, sir."

"Ah, madame! I am starving!"

"Hurry up, Nora. I'll assist you. Sit down and warm yourself, sir. You shall not be hungry long."

The kind-hearted widow rose and went to the assistance of Nora, leaving the stranger alone at the fire. He turned his back to the fire to get its genial warmth, and glanced around the room. He saw rifles and pistols on the walls. His hands itched to get hold of them. They evidently belonged to one who knew how to select good arms.

"Ah, madame," he said when she returned to the fire with a cup of strong coffee in her hand, "your husband knows how to choose a good rifle. I see."

"I have no husband, sir," she said sadly. "He was killed by the wolves."

"Ah! That is bad. The wolves are worse this winter than I ever knew them."

"Yes, sir. My son and three companions are now out in the forest after wolf scalps. They are down the river somewhere."

Sautene was startled.

"Is he with Monsieur Schnap, madame?" he asked.

"Yes—Mr. Snap is with him. Did you see or hear of him?"

"Mon Dieu, yes!" and he swallowed the coffee in order to gain time to think.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ABDUCTION.

WHEN he had drank the coffee Sautene pretended to be in a deep effort to get at the best flavor of the coffee.

"Did you see my son, sir?" Mrs. McCue eagerly asked.

"Yes, madame," he replied. "I saw him and his companions two days since."

"He was well?"

"Never better in his life, madame. They had more scalps than they could carry."

"Had they met the Indians when you saw them?"

"No, madame. But they are four brave men. The red men will not attack them. They are too many."

"Oh, I am too glad!" and the fond mother's eyes filled with tears.

Nora was rejoiced to hear of her brother's success. She knew how he would buy her a bright new dress when he received the bounty for the scalps; then, too, she had a tender corner in her heart for brave, handsome Bob Stewart, and the news that he too was alive and well made her cheeks glow and eyes sparkle.

Sautene ate a hearty meal, and then was shown to Dan's room and bed. He retired and slept without interruption till the next morning.

When he arose he found that his clothes had been washed, dried, and mended, with a thoughtfulness that could come of only kind and charitable hearts. The breakfast, too, was one that would have tempted the appetite of a king. He ate with the appetite of a gourmand.

The meal over, the mother and daughter sat by the fire and listened to the story of the Frenchman. He told of his hair-breadth escape from the savages, and other stories of cruelty that made their blood run cold.

"I want to return to my family," he said, after a pause of several minutes. "But I have no arms. I can't get home without a rifle. I will go to your neighbors and—"

"No, no, sir. We will give you a gun and knife, and everything else you may need. If my dear boy should be as you are, I shall hope that somebody may do the same for him. Nora, child, get your brother's gun and belt and knife."

"Ah, madame! Your kindness is too much!" exclaimed the hypocritical wretch, as pretty Nora brought him the rifle, with some powder, lead and caps. "A thousand thanks. I will never forget. I will come back in the spring and see you again, and show you how I appreciate your kindness."

All this in broken English sounded very well, and the mother and daughter believed it all.

It was found that there was but little powder and lead in the house, and Nora was about to go to a neighbor's house after some—a mile away.

"She can show me the way," he said, "and I will go."

"They may not let you have it," said Mrs. McCue. "Nora will go with you and get it."

So they started out together, and soon reached the neighbor's house, where they secured all they wanted.

Then they set out on their return.

When they reached a point about half way between the two houses Sautene suddenly stopped, seized the girl by the arm, and said:

"I will take you home with me. Come along."

"No, no!" she screamed. "Help, help—"

He clapped a hand over her mouth, stifled her cries, and then, seizing her round the waist, lifted her clear off her feet, and ran across the river on the ice with her.

She kicked, struggled, and scratched with all her might. But she was a mere infant in his arms. He laughed at her efforts to free herself, and carried her the faster.

At last, after he had made some five or six miles, he stood her on her feet, and said:

"Mademoiselle will walk some."

"No—not a step," she bravely replied.

"The wolves will eat you."

"I will climb a tree."

"Then you will freeze."

"No—my friends will follow your tracks."

"Not till darkness renders it too late."

"Then I will die rather than walk one step with you."

"Sacre! I will make you walk."

"You can't."

"I will," and he seized her by the arms and undertook to drag her.

She sat down in the snow and defied him.

"Sacre! I will kill you!" he hissed through clenched teeth, drawing a knife—her brother's knife—and raising it above her head.

"Strike, coward!" and she sprang to her feet, looking him full in the face. "Strike, if you dare! I defy you!"

CHAPTER XXV.

SAUTENE AND NORA M'CUE.

FOR once in his life Louis Sautene was cowed—and by a girl.

Nora McCue's defiance of him to his face caused him to quail.

His eyes fell before hers, and his upraised hand dropped to his side.

He could not muster the brute courage to strike her. He seemed to lack even the strength to do so.

"Strike, coward!" she cried again, looking him full in the face, with blazing eyes. "You wouldn't dare stand before my noble brother. Strike his sister if you can summon courage enough!"

"No. I will not strike you," he said finally. "I will save you for a more terrible revenge."

"Revenge?"

"Yes. It was your brother, not the Indians, who robbed me of my all. He tied me to a tree and left me to the tender mercies of the wolves. Ha, ha, ha! I have his pretty sister. I will make his heart bleed for her. I will have the grand satisfaction!"

"Liar, coward, brute!" she cried. "My brother never harmed you. If he did, it was to punish you for crimes you had committed against him or some one else."

"Come on—we won't stop," and he tried to drag her by the arm through the snow.

Down she went in the snow.

"I won't walk a step," she said. "You may kill me, but you can't make me walk."

A terrible oath burst from his vile lips, as he seized her once more in his arms and hurried forward with her.

He was a strong man, and ordinarily he would not have minded carrying her in that way. But the snow was deep and the cold very bitter. He had many miles to go, and night was coming on apace.

Mile after mile they passed, and still she refused to walk one step forward.

He stood her on her feet and threatened to leave her to the tender mercies of the wolves.

"Do so," she said. "They are more tender than you. They are really my friends, now."

"They would rend you."

"Even then I would prefer them to you," she replied.

"That is talk."

"Leave me here and try me."

"No; I will have my revenge, even though we perish together," and he seized her in his arms and pressed forward.

At last night came on again, and he stopped at a convenient place to camp.

He selected a place where a huge pile of logs, fallen trees, and bush lay together. To rake away the snow and get a fire started was a tedious and very cold job.

By the time the light could be seen any distance, he was surprised by a party of Indians, who were making for the same spot.

They belonged to the same tribe to which he had connected himself. He was overjoyed, for now he believed himself safe from attack. To them he told a story of how he had been attacked by a party of settlers—how he succeeded in making his escape and capturing the pale-faced girl for a present to the chief of the tribe.

Of course Nora could not understand a word he was saying to them. She knew he was lying to them about her, however, and determined to take the first chance that presented itself to explain to the chief the story of her capture.

The Indians remained by the camp-fire all night, and on the morrow a portion of them went with Sautene, for the purpose of conveying the young captive to the old chief of the tribe.

"Chief! chief!" cried Nora, on seeing that she was about to be carried away without having an opportunity to tell her story to him, "I want to tell you something."

"Ugh! what maiden say?" the chief asked, turning to her.

"I want to say that you will have my people make war on your tribe if you do not send me

back to my home. That cowardly Frenchman has lied to you. He took me from my home down on Michigan River. You know the white men are brave and will follow you to death to rescue me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Sautene. "She would make you tremble, chief. She is a good talker. Let her talk to the old chief. He is wise, and wants a young wife."

"Ugh, yes. Maiden heap talk," grunted the red-skin, as he turned away.

Sautene gave her a grin of leering triumph, and said:

"You may as well make up your mind to go along quietly. You will never see your people again."

"Yes, I will, wretch, and see you hung besides," she retorted.

On his telling the red-skins that she would not walk one step, they constructed a very primitive sled and placed her on it. She sprang out of it as soon as their hands were off of her.

"Ugh!" grunted the chief; "tie her on. She no get off then."

They tied her securely to the sled, and then started northward with her.

Some ten miles above there the party divided.

One party was to go toward the lake, and the other to take the captive girl to the old chief of the tribe.

At the last moment the Frenchman concluded to send the girl on, and join himself to the hunting-party going to the lake.

"Good-bye, dear," he said to Nora. "Give my love to the old chief, and make him as happy as you can. He is very fond of young wives."

She made no reply.

But she gave him a look he never forgot.

A minute or two later the party in charge of the captive started off.

Sautene gazed after her as far as she could be seen, and then turned and followed the party going towards the lake.

Having snow-shoes, the party made good time. In about four hours they came in sight of the lake, and that night encamped in a thicket where they succeeded in finding enough wood and fagots on the ground under the snow to make a comfortable fire.

During the evening another party of savages joined them, with a large number of wolf scalps, for which they were to get one dollar each from the State government.

The wolf scalp bounty was the only thing that could tempt the Indian to leave his wigwam in dead of winter and go on a hunt.

The number of scalps in the party ran up into the hundreds. They counted them by the light of the camp-fire.

Sautene informed the party that the old log-hut on the north bank of the Michigan River, thirty miles back from the lake, was then the rendezvous of nearly all the wolves in that part of the country.

"There are four white-men in there," he said, "who draw the wolves by the air of broiled venison, and then shoot them down. The snow all round the hut must be full of frozen scalps."

"Ugh!" grunted the chief of the party. "Pale faces heap smart. Git all wolf scalps, Injun git few."

"They have no business there," said Sautene. "This is the red man's country. The wolves are his. We ought to go over there, take the pale faces' scalps and wolf scalps too. If we bury them under the ice in the river, their people will never know what became of them."

CHAPTER XXVI.

DAN SHOWS MIKE HOW TO SHOOT.

LET us now return to our heroes, the Wolf Boys, whom we left in the hut on the north bank of the Michigan River.

The reader will doubtless remember the worry of Dan, Bob and Snap over the mystery of the fate of the Frenchman.

They could not find a single bone to show that the wolves had feasted on his miserable carcase. Nor could they discover any tracks in the snow to show which way he went. The high wind during the night had drifted the snow over the place where the last wolf had taken himself off. That angels had come down, released and borne him away they could not and did not believe.

"Well," said Dan, turning to Snap, "he's gone, but which way is more than I can tell."

"Gosh, yes. Ther devil takes care of his own."

"So I've heard. I don't think the devil would want Sautene around, though."

"Why not?" Bob Stewart asked, turning suddenly around.

"He doesn't like to have worse things done in his kingdom."

"That's so!" put in Mike. "He's worse than Nick every time, begorra!"

"Nick hasn't got him, I'll make him a present of him the next time I meet him. I'd give fifty wolf scalps to know what became of him."

"So would I," assented Bob.

"If he's alive we'll hear from 'im," said Snap.

"Yes, I guess we will. It seems to me, though, that there was no chance in the world for him to get away. There were wolves around all night."

"What's become of 'em now?" asked Bob. "There isn't one in sight."

"Sure, it's meself as won't cry about it," Mike remarked. "The bloody dogs are the devil's own for raw meat."

"They won't eat Irish meat, you know," said Dan.

"Och, now be aisy wid yer loying, Mither Dan."

"Thunder! didn't you know that, Mike Reagan?"

"Och, he's green," said Bob, who instantly came in to help Dan. "He doesn't know anything about wolves."

Mike looked from one to the other in a puzzled sort of way. Then he glanced around at Snap, who managed to keep his countenance by manipulating an enormous quid of tobacco he had put into his mouth.

But he caught a twinkle of the old hunter's gray eye and trembled.

"Fadad, it's because av me graneness that they won't ate me," he said. "It's the ripe fools they are afther, begorra."

"But we are telling you just what old hunters think," persisted Dan. "No wolf was ever known to eat an Irishman."

"Why?" Mike asked.

"Because they could never catch one," was the reply, at which Bob and Snap roared with laughter.

"It's a foine lad ye are, Mither Dan," said Mike. "I'll let ye shoot me musket when ye see a wolf."

"Gosh!" gasped Snap. "That's one on yer, Dan."

Dan laughed as hearty as the others, and said: "Thank you, Mike. I'll take one shot with it, just to show you how to handle a valuable weapon like that."

"Och, now, it's dying I am to know how."

"Just wait till another wolf shows himself, and I'll give him a taste of it."

Mike suddenly became very quiet after that. He ran his hand into his pouch, and took therefrom three large bullets, which he slyly dropped into the barrel of the musket.

Several hours passed, and about noon two huge wolves were seen coming toward the hut, snuffing the air, as if they were following a vague trail.

"There's two of them," said Bob, taking his rifle and making ready to fire.

"Hold on, Bob," cried Dan. "Let me have a shot at 'em with the musket."

"All right. Bring 'em both down with one shot."

"Here, give me your old kicker, Mike Reagan."

Mike handed him the musket.

There was a merry twinkle in his eyes as he looked at the old gun.

"Now, watch me, Mike. You should plant your shoulder firmly against the breech, this way. These Irish hold with both hands as though they wanted to hold on to it. It kicks hardest when you hold it loosely."

"Fadad, I relave ye," replied Mike, going back a few paces, so as to be out of the way of the musket.

Then he took the musket, and away went Dan, looking back at the opposite side of the hut, to see if the wolves were still there.

"Whop!" yelled Mike, dancing around the hut. "The old gun is kicking!"

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growled Dan, "and I'll get even with you for it, see if I don't."

"You laid out both of the wolves, Dan," Bob said, looking through the crevice of the hut.

"And myself with 'em," he replied. "Hanged if my shoulder wasn't doubled back on the other one."

"Better let Mike manage it hereafter," suggested Bob.

"Guess I will."

Mike picked up his gun with a broad grin on his face. Dan was angry, but knew he was to blame under the circumstances, and so made no fuss about it. But he suspected that the Irishman had put up a job on him, and inwardly swore to get even with him.

While Dan was pulling himself together, Snap ran out of the hut and secured the scalps.

When he returned, he said:

"That's a whole pack coming down the river."

"Wolves?"

"Yes."

"We must stop 'em here."

"Yes," said Snap. "Brile some o' that meat."

"But cut off a good slice of the venison, and throw it on the coals."

In a few minutes the odor of burning meat was strong.

Ten minutes later there were a score of hungry wolves howling around the hut.

Several thrust their heads through the holes that had been cut in the logs, and frantically yelped for something to eat.

"Humph!" grunted Snap. "Never saw 'em so hungry afore."

"They'd be dangerous outside, wouldn't they?"

"Gosh, yes."

Snap was fixing the noose to catch them with. He wanted to save powder and lead as well as secure the scalps before they were frozen.

"Scalp 'em alive?" Bob asked.

"Yes."

Dan took the noose, and in half a minute he had a big, shaggy fellow in limbo. In another half minute the wolf had lost his scalp.

"Let 'im go," said Snap.

Mike released him.

The wolf yanked his head back, as though it was an extended piece of India-rubber suddenly let go.

Blood ran from his wound, and instantly the other ravenous beasts sprang upon him. They tore him in pieces, and a general free fight occurred over the pieces.

"That's a clear case of dog eat dog," remarked Bob, as he watched the progress of the fight.

"Yes," assented Dan, "and I'd rather go out there and fight with them than shoot that blamed old kicker again."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TWO TO ONE—CLOSE QUARTERS.

THE wolves fought savagely for over an hour. Several of them were killed and devoured. Then those who had managed to keep outside the bellies of the others were shot down by the Wolf Boys. Not a single wolf of that pack got away alive. Their scalps found a lodgment within the hut.

"That's pretty good," said Bob. "I wish another pack would come along."

"Yes, We've done well," returned Dan. "There must be at least fifty frozen scalps under the snow."

"Gosh, yes," Snap remarked.

"How are we going to get them? It's deuced cold work to get 'em off."

"Chop ther heads off with axes an' warm 'em by the fire," suggested Snap.

"That's so," said Bob, laughing. "But we haven't got wood enough to last all winter, you see."

They had but one log left.

"Got ter cut some," said Snap.

They took the axes and went out to the pile of driftwood, under the great trees, against which it had lodged, and commenced scraping away the snow. It was cold work, but they soon warmed up when the chopping commenced.

All the afternoon they took turns at chopping. There were but two axes in the party, so but two could chop at a time. They all knew how to handle an ax, however, and ere night came again they had nearly a week's supply of wood in the hut.

Not a single wolf had they seen since they came out to cut wood. They passed to and from the hut without their rifles.

Suddenly Mike espied a deer crossing the river on the ice nearly a mile above the hut.

"I'll go up and get him," said Dan, quickly running to the hut to get his rifle.

"Take me musket wid yer!" sung out Mike.

"I want to kill the deer, not myself," replied Dan, as he came out, rifle in hand.

By the time he had gained the woods the deer had disappeared from sight in the forest. Dan looked everywhere for him, and at last found the tracks. But he also saw wolf tracks, and knew that they were after the same game.

"This wont do," he said to himself. "If I shoot the deer, the wolves will pounce upon and eat him up. If he gets away they'll turn on me and force me to take a tree. Hanged if I don't go back to the hut."

He turned and started to go back.

To his surprise he found two immense wolves on his trail. They faced him—the hungriest looking brutes he had ever seen.

"What do you want, you black demons?" he said. "I'll give one of you a bullet to eat."

He aimed at one and fired. The bullet crashed into his brain. The brute gave a yelp, sprang into the air, and fell dead in the snow.

The other one gave a fierce growl, and dashed forward to attack him.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed Dan, "do you want to eat me! Off, you brute!" and he struck him a stunning blow with his heavy rifle barrel. The wolf was only the more enraged, and sprang at him again.

Whack!

Whack!

The heavy rifle was too much for the beast. He was sent rolling over in the snow at the third blow. But he came up smiling—no—grinning again, and renewed the attack.

"If I should miss him, he'd be right on me," said Dan. "If he gets a good mouthful of me I'd be ruined for life."

He waited and watched.

The wolf made another spring at him. Dan brought his rifle down on his head with tremendous force. The blow staggered him, and he partially sank down in the snow.

Dan drew his knife and plunged it to the hilt in his side. It cut his heart, if a wolf can be said to have such a thing, and he sank down with a whine, and gave up the ghost.

"Two scalps, but no venison," remarked Dan, as he proceeded to reload his faithful rifle.

That done he secured the two scalps and started back toward the hut.

Crack!

Crack!

Boom!

Two rifle-shots and Mike's old musket startled him.

"Hanged if that doesn't mean business!" he exclaimed, quickening his pace.

Then he heard wolves howling and yelping, as if in a struggle for the mastery.

By and by he came in sight of the hut. He saw Snap, Bob and Mike running from the hut.

"Jerusalem!" gasped Dan. "What are they leaving the hut for?"

He made the fastest time he could through the snow, and soon came up with them. A glance told him what the movement meant.

They had shot down the deer, and were now fighting off the wolves, who were trying to devour it.

"That's the same deer I was after," said Dan. "The wolves were after him. I had to stop and fight two of them. I shot one and had to fight the other one at close quarters."

"Gosh!" grunted Snap. "They must be hungry."

"They're starving," replied Dan.

"We've got the deer, anyhow," remarked Bob, as the last wolf sullenly turned away from the presence of the four men.

They lost no time in getting the deer into the hut and preparing the meat for future use. Seven wolf scalps were also secured at the same time.

Night came on, and with it another small pack of wolves, drawn by the savory smell of broiled venison steaks.

They got a goodly number of scalps during the evening, and then laid down to rest, well knowing that as long as the hungry wolves were howling around the hut no more dangerous foe was about.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAN HEARS OF NORA'S ABDUCTION.

THE next morning they were up bright and early. Snap broiled some venison steaks, and made coffee for breakfast. Three wolves, who had lingered around all night, were quickly dispatched and their scalps secured.

Then the four hunters sat down to breakfast, eating heartily of the steaks and coffee. It was a breakfast they had appetites for, and they did ample justice to it.

But that day was a dull one for them. Save the three they saw at sunrise, not a wolf did they

see that day. They sat by the fire and told stories of adventures in the forests.

The night that followed was like the day. Not a howl or yelp did they hear. The result was they slept soundly till daylight.

"This is dull business," said Dan, looking out and seeing no wolves about the hut.

"Gosh, yes. We'll have ter move ef we git any more sculps."

"We'll have to bury what we have now, then," suggested Bob, "for we can't carry 'em along on a hunt."

It was agreed that the large pile of wolf-scalps they had on hand, now amounting to several hundred, be buried in some secure place till such time as they were ready to come for them.

They raised the log floor of the hut and dug into the hard, frozen ground with their axes, till they excavated a hole large enough to hold all the wolf-scalps they had on hand. Then they buried them, covering them as securely as they could.

Something moved them to remain there one more night, in the hope that the savory odor of the venison steaks would attract some wandering pack of wolves. But the night passed and not a wolf did they hear. They were quite disgusted the next day, and were in favor of leaving the hut to go in search of more game.

"We may not have a chance to cook any rations," said Snap. "We'd better cook enough for three days."

"Yes, so I say."

They spent the greater part of the day broiling venison steaks.

Just as they were about to leave the hut they were astonished at seeing two of the old settlers from up the river approach.

"Hello!"

"Hello, Snap?"

The friends were cordial in their greeting.

"Why, what brought you down here, Mr. Hegeman?" Dan asked of the elderly man he had known nearly all his life.

"Dan, we have bad news for you," replied Hegeman.

Dan turned pale.

They had just come down from the settlement. He knew that some calamity had befallen the dear ones at home, and turned deathly pale.

"What is it?" he gasped.

"Keep cool, my boy," said the old man. "It's a hard blow, but it will come out all right in the end, we hope. Your sister Nora has been carried off by a Frenchman."

Dan leapt several feet in the air.

"Go on!" he gasped. "Tell me all."

"Three or four days ago a Frenchman staggered up to your mother's door, worn out and hungry. He said the Indians had pressed him so hard that he barely made his escape with his life. Of course your kind-hearted mother took him in, warmed, fed, clothed and armed him. Not having ammunition enough for him, she sent Nora with him to a neighbor's house for some. Neither he nor Nora have since been seen in the settlement. The snow drifted so badly that tracks were covered in an hour."

Dan glared at Hegeman.

"Did you see the wretch?" he asked.

"No. Your mother says he was dark, strong, and rather below the average height."

"Sautene!" exclaimed Snap.

"Sautene!" ejaculated Bob.

"The Frinchman!" blurted out Mike.

"Yes, 'twas he!" hissed Dan, through his clenched teeth. "No more wolf-scalps till I get him! Where does he live, Snap?"

"Up toward the Strait," replied Snap.

"Who will go with me? I'll have her, and if a hair of her head has been touched, woe unto the tribe that harbors the villain!" and the young hunter buried his face in his hands and trembled like a leaf.

"I—I—I will go!" exclaimed every man in the party.

"There are six brave hearts in the party," said Bob, "and we'll stand by you to the last, Dan. Great God! we'll never leave Nora in such hands as long as one of us is alive."

Dan silently grasped the hand of every man in the party.

"Show me the red nagur till I punch me bag-net through him, the blaggard!" exclaimed Mike.

"Gosh! yes," said Snap.

They held a consultation as to the best course to pursue.

"Go right up to his home, and demand the girl of the tribe," suggested Hegeman. "We are not at war with them, and they will be compelled to give her up."

They decided that the suggestion was a good one, and prepared to act on it. More rations were cooked, and every preparation made to start at daylight the next morning.

That night they sat around the fire talking over

the probable result of the expedition, when they were startled by several thunderous raps on the door of the hut.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

THE whole party sprang to their feet and ran to the side of the hut to peep through the crevice. To their surprise they beheld a solitary Indian standing there.

"Hello, red-skin!" cried Snap, "what do you want?"

"Ugh—Injun cold and hungry—want to come in to pale-face fire," was the prompt reply.

"Why, yes, of course yer kin. Gosh! come in," and he threw open the door for him to enter.

"Ugh—heap cold!" grunted the savage, as he entered the hut and stood by the fire.

"Where are the other hunters, red-skin?" Snap demanded.

"Gone. Me climb tree till wolf go away. Hunters all gone."

"A tree is a mighty handy thing sometimes, eh?"

"Ugh—pale-face heap wise. Wolf heap hungry now."

"Gosh! yes, I'd say so."

The Indian seemed to be surprised at finding so many men in the hut, and kept casting furtive glances around the room.

Old man Hegeman noticed it, and whispered to Bob that he was suspicious of the red-skin. Bob watched his opportunity and communicated with Snap. He found that Snap was equally suspicious himself.

"Whar did yer take a tree, red-skin?" he asked of the savage.

"Down river."

"Hungry?"

"Ugh—yes."

Snap gave him several slices of broiled venison steak. There was no doubt about his being hungry. He ate like a wolf.

"Pale-face heap good to poor Injun," he said, when he could eat no more.

"Do you know Sautene, the Frenchman?" Snap finally asked of him.

"Yes, me know him. Him heap big liar."

"You're right, red-skin. He's the biggest liar on the earth. Do you know where he is?"

"No; he hunt wolf-scalps in wood."

"When did you see him?"

"Two moons ago."

Snap looked hard at the savage, and then said: "Sit down and get warm. You can sleep over there by those logs."

The savage sat down, and gazed steadily into the fire, never once looking around to see what the others were doing.

Snap and Hegeman whispered together for some time, and then they both took their rifles and slipped out of the hut, leaving Bob in charge of the door.

Outside they crept all around in search of indications of the presence of a foe.

"I don't see or hear anything," said Snap to himself, "but that 'er red-skin was lying as sure as death. He didn't fool me any. Gosh! A Injun git lost in the woods! Humph! He's a-ly-ing, that's what's the matter with him."

Hegeman soon joined him, and the two compared notes. Neither had seen anything, but both believed the Indian was lying.

"See here, Snap!" whispered Hegeman. "Let's go in and cover the fire with ashes, so as to make the room dark. Then we can lay round on the floor and peer through the cracks without being seen. Two of us can watch the red-skin."

"Gosh, yes!" said Snap, leading the way back into the hut.

Hegeman at once commenced covering the burning logs with ashes, to the surprise of the Indian.

"What for pale-face put out fire?" the red-skin asked.

"To make us sleep good," said Hegeman.

"To keep your friends from shooting us in the dark," added Snap.

The Indian looked hard at Snap, but made no reply for several minutes. Then he said:

"Me go now."

"Oh, no; wolf catch you," Snap replied. "The wolves are very hungry to-night, and they would eat you up. They are very fond of red-skin meat. You will sleep better here than up in a tree, you know."

"Ugh! Me warm now. Me go away."

"No, you will stay till morning. Lie down, or I'll blow your head off," hissed Hegeman, presenting a pistol to his head.

The Indian laid down on the floor without uttering another word. Snap laid himself alongside of him, knife in hand. Hegeman, Dan, Bob

and the others, stationed themselves on three sides of the hut on their stomach, with their faces to the crevices, and watched and listened.

One, two, three hours passed, and then they heard a signal from the outside. It seemed to come from toward the river.

At the first signal the savage moved uneasily. He seemed nervous, and tried to crawl downward. But Snap was alongside of him at every move. Dark as it was, he knew that the old wolf-hunter was cognizant of his movements.

Suddenly he rose to his knees in an attempt to rise to his feet. Snap rose with him, knife in hand.

"Lie down!" hissed Snap.

"No, me go."

"All right. Good-bye," and he opened the door for him. "Sorry you can't stay longer. Tell your people we are waiting for them."

"Ugh!" grunted the red rascal, "me tell 'em."

As he placed his foot on the threshold Snap sent his long wolf-knife to the hilt in his back. The point came through his breast.

With a groan, the savage fell forward on his face, just outside the door.

"Did you settle him?" Hegeman asked.

"Gosh, yes."

The signal from the river was heard again.

Snap knew the meaning of the signal. He had spent many years among the savages of the Northwest. The signals of most of the tribes were familiar to him. Those he now heard were simply meant to call out the spy they had sent into the hut to open the door for them to get to work.

Suddenly Snap answered the signal to the effect that he had killed all the occupants of the hut, and for them to come on.

There was a rush of over a score of savages, Louis Sautene included.

"Be ready," whispered Snap, "they are coming."

The unsuspecting wretches rushed up to the door of the hut.

"Now!" cried Snap.

Five rifles and Mike's musket blazed away at them. Six red-skins sank down in the snow. Howls of rage and dismay burst from the others. Then they broke and fled, but not till four pistols inside had settled the fate of as many more.

The whole thing was done in just one minute. Two or three savages lay outside dying. The others had been more fortunate in being killed outright.

One of them commenced his death song. He recounted his exploits as a hunter, then his deeds as a warrior.

"That's a nice song," said Snap, who understood every word he uttered. "If I had a horn I'd blow it for you. When you get to your Indian heaven, you'd better keep away from white men. They are bad men for red-skins to fool with."

The savage paid no heed to the remarks of his implacable foe. He kept on with his song. His voice grew weaker every minute. Suddenly he gasped, as if for breath. Then a gurgle, not unlike a death-rattle, was heard. They knew then that it was all over with the red-skin.

CHAPTER XXX.

MIKE'S DESPERATE BATTLE.

LOUIS SAUTENE had led the Indians to the hut again. Like the first band he led, they had met with a sudden disaster.

To make sure of their work they had sent one of their number as a spy to enter the hut and claim the hospitality of the hunters for the night. He was to stealthily open the door for them at midnight, when they would enter and capture the four men. They never dreamed that two experienced old Indian fighters from the settlement above had joined them.

The reader has seen how the spy was disposed of by Snap, and how the band had been deceived by a false signal.

Retreating down to the river bank again, the discomfited savages counted their loss. Eleven warriors were missing. And they had not had a single shot in return for what they had received.

"Sacred! Diable!" hissed Sautene. "The hut is full of men. They have received the grand reinforcement."

"Ugh! Sautene is a big liar," said the chief. "He said there was four boys in the hut, when it is full of brave warriors. We will go away."

They turned and went slowly down the river. The intense darkness prevented them from going very fast. Daylight found them but ten miles away from the scene of their defeat.

When daylight came our heroes found eleven dead Indians in front of the hut. They were frozen stiff, and hard as stone.

"That was good work," said Hegeman, as he looked at the ghastly sight.

"We must bury them," said Snap.

"Bury 'em in the ice, and chuck 'em under."

"Oh, yes. That's the easiest way."

They ate a hearty breakfast, and then went to the river and picked up the arms of the dead. There were eleven good rifles, with knives and ammunition. These they concealed under the heavy covering of the hut.

Then they cut a hole in the ice on the river, and pushed the dead carcasses into it. The current carried them down toward the lake.

Then the men, all eagerness to pursue the savages, followed their tracks. No wind was blowing, hence the trail was very plain.

"There's a white man in that party," said Hegeman, after examining the tracks in the snow for some time.

"How do you know?" Dan asked.

"Indians turn their great toes slightly inward when they walk. There's one whose toes turn the other way. That belongs to a white man."

"Then it must be Sautene?"

"I don't say who it is. I don't know. But it was made by a white man. That I do know."

"Well, we want to pursue them, and see who that white man is," remarked Bob Stewart.

"Yes," said Dan, "that's what I say."

"I vote to follow them and see who they are," Hegeman said.

"So do I," responded the other five.

"Come on then," Snap called, leading the way back to the hut.

They cooked up several days' rations again, and in another hour, having concealed everything, they set out on the trail of the retreating savages.

Of course they made faster time than the red-skins did, as they had daylight to guide. But, during pursuit, the band had turned away from the river, and made their way northward toward the village.

All day long they trudged through the snow, stopping for anything. From certain signs in the snow they could tell that they were gradually gaining on the savages.

"We are not very far behind," said Hegeman.

"If they stop to camp in the early part of the morning, we will see their camp-fire before we

but they did not stop until about midnight, so our heroes were compelled to stop at about the same hour, some five miles behind them.

But they were up and away at daylight. By noon they came in sight.

"There they are!" cried Snap, as he caught a glimpse of them through the forest.

The Indians saw them at the same time, and started to show fight. They saw that there were only six men pursuing them. There were nearly three times that many red-men.

A man sprang behind a tree and commenced firing. The savages evidently had unbounded confidence in their ability to wipe out the six whites.

"Look out for the Frenchman," cried Dan.

"I leave him to me. Don't shoot him. He's mine!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

Hegeman and Snap brought down their rifles, but the distance was too great to make much of it. They dodged from tree to tree, getting nearer and nearer to the savages. The others followed their example, and while they were near enough to make a shot for them.

Suddenly two of them made a break for one. The Frenchman fired his musket at them, and fired just as they came together. It kicked him heels over head in the snow, and brought down both of them at the same time. A dozen buck-shot whizzed just before they reached the tree.

"Look out for Mike!" yelled Bob, as he saw the Frenchman engaged by the musket.

The savages, enraged by the losses they had suffered, uttered howls of rage and made a determined charge on the Irishman.

Some of them started forward to get his scalp.

But he had been shot, whereas he had been killed over by his musket.

"Look out, Mike!" cried Bob.

"Git up, yer fool!" roared Snap.

"Under!" yelled Dan. "They will get your

Crack!

Crack!

Two rifles dropped two of the eager red-skins.

Five kept on after the scalp.

One scrambled to his feet.

Crack!

Crack!

One tumbled over in the snow.

Three remained.

They dashed forward with demoniacal yells.

Mike seized his musket.

But it was unloaded.

He plunged the bayonet through one, and then

brained the other with the breech.

The third one recoiled.

"Ugh! Pale-face not dead?"

"Not much!" replied Mike, starting toward

him with the bayonet.

The savage saw how the situation was, and

tried to get away.

"Stop, yer dirty blaggard!" cried Mike, dash-

ing after him. The savage took to his heels and

ran to cover.

Mike dashed recklessly forward, fool-like, en-

couraged because the red-skin had run from him.

"Take a tree, you fool!" yelled Hegeman.

"Take a tree!" yelled Bob.

"Stop!" screamed Dan.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, "the fool is a goner!"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Three Indians fired at him.

Three bullets passed through his clothes, but

did not touch him.

Crack!

Crack!

Two bullets whizzed so close to his head as to

cut his cap.

He never flinched.

In his eager desire to catch the red-skin who

had fled from him, he never once thought of his

danger.

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, as Mike overtook

him at the tree, behind which he tried to screen

himself.

"Ugh, yerself!" exclaimed Mike, thrusting his

bayonet clear through him. "How do yer loike

it?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RESCUE OF NORA.

THE red-skin sank down at the foot of the tree.

Mike bayoneted him the second time, and was

about to repeat the act when a stinging sensation

on his left shoulder told him he was hit.

"Come away, yer fool!" yelled Snap again.

The savages made a determined effort to bring

him down.

But the five whites kept up such a hot fire on

them that they were unable to give him their

whole attention.

Mike suddenly became aware of his danger.

He sprang away from the tree, as if he con-

sidered it of the deadly upas species.

Howls of rage and desultory shots followed

him.

He ran back to the very tree from which he had

started in the deadly pursuit.

Regaining it, he began reloading his musket as

though nothing unusual had occurred, to the as-

tonishment of the others, who could not conceive

of so much daring in him.

By and by the savages retreated.

The Wolf Boys caught a glimpse of Sautene

once during the fight.

Not one of them would shoot at him. They

wanted to run him down and capture him alive.

"That was a brave deed," said Hegeman, com-

ing up to Mike after the savages had taken to

their heels.

"Bedad," he replied, "I wanted to still the red

nagur wid me bayonet, and I did it."

"Yes. You killed three in almost as many

minutes."

"And two at one shot," put in Bob.

"Mike, old boy, give me your hand," said Dan,

as he came up.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap, "ef he hadn't been a

blamed fool, he'd been killed."

"Hooray for all fools!" exclaimed Mike.

"Hooray! Hooray!" cried Dan. "If the

world had only wise men in it, we'd have no

fun."

"That's so," Bob added.

"Bedad, it's a loive fool I'd be instead av a

dead brave," Mike remarked, cool as any ice-

berg.

They pushed on, and as the shades of night fell

upon the great forest the pursuit slackened. It

would be dangerous for them to follow in the

dark, as an ambush could be very easily pre-

pared for their destruction.

Selecting a good place to encamp for the night,

the Wolf Boys built a big fire and put out

guards.

The Frenchman and his savage allies pushed

on, however, determined to reach their homes

where they were. A number of the warriors was called out to meet them. The chief said:

"Louis Sautene was soundly condemned for hav-

ing brought on the trouble with the whites.

"I will give up the white maiden," said the

old chief. "I am not willing to go to war and

have my warriors killed in order that I may have

her for a wife. I have wives enough now—more

than I want. Sautene is not wise. He must go

away, for the pale-faces will demand that he be

given up to them. I don't wish to do so, yet

cannot refuse."

Sautene was astounded.

So were most of the young warriors of the

village.

Several of them had seen Nora. She was both

young and beautiful.

They told the old chief to keep her, and they

would do the fighting for him.

He said no; declared he would give up the

young maiden.

They then said they would follow and take her

away from them again.

Thus matters stood when Dan and his friends

came in sight of the village.

The old chief led Nora outside of his wigwam,

and pointing towards the hill, on the brow of which

stood the six whites, said:

"Maiden, there are your people. They have

come for you. Go to them and tell them that the

old chief sent you. He does not want an unwill-

ing wife. I am the friend of the pale-faces.

Go!"

She sprang away like a young fawn, and ran

through the village toward the hill. Bob was the

first to recognize her, and dashed forward to meet

her.

They were sweethearts in the settlement.

"Nora!"

"Oh, Bob!"

The next moment they were locked in each

other's arms.

"Oh, I knew you would come!" she sobbed.

Dan ran like a deer down the hill.

"Brother! Brother!" she screamed.

Dan pressed her to his heart and burst into tears

of joy.

Snap and the others came up to greet her.

She kissed each one of them, for she knew they

had come through the deep snow to rescue her.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Mike, as she kissed him,

"I'd kill the whole tribe for another like that

same, so I wud!"

Nora laughed, as did the rest, and said:

"I wouldn't mind giving each of you a thou-

sand."

"Nora, are you hurt?" Dan asked.

"Not in the least, brother," she said. "The old

chief treated me kindly. The young warriors

were opposed to the chief sending me back to

you. They want to fight, and there's lots of 'em

there. Better go back at once."

"Gosh, yes," said Snap. "Come on."

They had rescued the maiden, and so they

were willing to return.

"We'll hunt up Sautene when we have restored

Nora to her mother," said Bob, and the others

acquiesced in the wisdom of the suggestion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE.

ON the way back, the party of wolf-hunters did

not make such speed as they did in going. They

had not the same incentive.

Nora related the story of Sautene's treachery,

and each one of the Wolf Boys swore to punish

him if he could be found south of the Canada

line.

She was strong and hearty, notwithstanding

her rough usage, and marched with them as

steadily as an old veteran.

When night came on the sky became overcast,

and the wind sighed in the forest, as if sympa-

thizing with them in the horrors of the coming

storm.

"Gosh," said Snap, looking around in every di-

rection, "a storm's coming!"

"Yes," said Hegeman, "and it's going to be a

bad one, too, I fear."

Dan's cheek blanched.

He knew something of the horrors of a mid-

night freeze or snow-storm in that climate.

He might be able to stand it himself, but he

dreaded to have Nora exposed to it.

"I know a cave," said Snap to Hegeman, "out

on the left here some four or five miles."

"Can you find it under the snow?"

"Yes, guess I can. Never found it any other

way."

"Try it, then. I fear a heavy storm is coming

on."

Snap led the way, and the others followed as

fast as they could.

They reached the place just as the sun was

sinking behind the trees.

The snow covered everything. The hills rose in various shapes and directions. Snap looked around at the trees and hills, and then went to a certain spot against the side of a hill and said:

"The entrance is here."

"What?"

"The mouth of the cave is here. We'll have to dig through the snow."

"At it then!" exclaimed Hegeman. "The snow is flying now."

They drew their long wolf knives and began digging in the snow. In ten or fifteen minutes they had gotten down between two rocks—in a crevice.

"This is it," said Snap.

Ten minutes more they were able to crawl in. It surprised them how warm the air inside was.

"There's a pile of fagots inside here somewhere," said Snap, "if somebody hasn't burned it."

"Look for it," suggested Hegeman.

"Gosh! I'll feel for it. No use looking."

"That's better," chuckled the old man.

"Whew! how the wind roars outside!" exclaimed Bob.

"The storm rages in all its fury now," said Hegeman. "If we had been an hour late we would have been lost."

Such a snow-storm they had never seen before. In thirty minutes the drift had literally filled up the mouth of the cave again, and the little party of seven were practically "buried" under the ground as well as the snow.

"Here's the fagots!" cried Snap, some distance off.

"Have you got your flints and tinder-box?" Hegeman asked.

"Yes."

"Strike a light, then."

Snap went to work, and in ten minutes he had a little blaze going.

"Thank gracious for that," said Nora, as she saw it.

They made their way towards the fire over a perfectly smooth surface.

"When did you find this cave, Snap?" Hegeman asked.

"Last winter," was the reply.

"Do the Indians know of its existence?"

"Don't know—guess they do, though."

"Then we may as well have one on guard near the entrance."

"No need of that," said Dan. "The snow is on guard to-night."

"Yes, that's so," added Bob.

"But what will we do for something to eat?" Nora asked.

"Oh, we have rations enough for two days, yet," Hegeman replied.

"Then we are all right."

So they were.

Thinking he might be forced to seek quarters there some winter night, the cautious Snap had piled up fagots in the cave for the purpose of keeping warm. That pile now stood them in need, and gave them cheerfulness when nothing else could.

"How large is this cave?" Hegeman asked of Snap.

"Gosh! I don't know. It's as big as all outside."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Dan.

"Yes," repeated Snap. "There's a river in it which I have never crossed."

"Jewhilkens!"

"Where is it?"

"Out thar about a quarter of a mile," he replied, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. Bob and Dan whistled.

They were very tired and needed sleep. Yet they resolved to see that river before they laid down by the fire.

Taking several brands from the fire, Dan and Bob started for the river. Snap went with them.

They soon reached it, and stood on the brink of a silent river, whose waters flowed toward the great lakes. They waved the torches above their heads, and tried in vain to get a glimpse of the farther shore.

Dan took up a stone and threw it with all his force. They listened and heard it fall into the water.

"It's a big river," remarked Bob. "I wonder if the water is good to drink?"

"Gosh, yes."

Bob got down on his hands and knees and drank some of it. He found it cold and sweet.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "This is a great discovery. The Indians must know something about this cave."

"It's wrapped in eternal darkness," said Dan. "Come, let's go back to the fire."

They returned to the fire and reported what they had seen. The party then discussed the

situation for an hour or so, and then laid down to sleep.

Tired as they were, they were awake again at sunrise.

Hegeman had a watch, which enabled them to ascertain whether it was night or day outside.

They ate breakfast, and then took a walk over to the river, three of the party carrying torches.

Just as they reached the brink they heard splashes in the water, as though several heavy substances had fallen into it. Suddenly they heard a crash, a wild shriek, and a splash in the water, whilst daylight streamed through a rent in the roof of the cave.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SINGULAR CAPTURE—THE YOUNG LOVERS.

HAD the river risen up and overwhelmed our heroes as they stood on its brink, they could not have been more astonished than they were.

Where all was intense darkness a stream of daylight poured in. A great hole in the roof of the cave, nearly one hundred feet above them, enabled them to see the leaden sky beyond.

"Ugh—oh—help!" cried a voice in the water, where the earth and stones had fallen.

"Oh!" gasped Nora McCue, grasping her brother's arm. "I know that voice! It's Sautene!"

"Gosh, yes!" grunted Snap.

"Help! help!"

The man in the river naturally swam toward the lights.

He struck the brink and stood on his feet, trembling like a leaf.

"In the name of God!" he asked, in a trembling voice, looking at Hegeman, whom he did not know, "where am I? Have I fallen into the—"

"Yes," said Snap, stepping forward and grasping him by the collar. "You have into our hands, which good luck we didn't really expect."

"Monsieur Schnaps!"

"Yes—that's my name."

Dan stepped forward.

"Monsieur McCue! Sacre!"

Bob showed himself.

"Diable!"

Nora stepped forward and faced him.

"Mon Dieu!" he gasped, turning deathly pale.

"In the depths of the earth I meet you! Are we all dead, or do we live and dream?"

"Oh, we are not dreaming, I guess," said Dan.

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" groaned the Frenchman, looking up to where the earth gave way under his feet and dropped him down into the silent river in the cave.

The storm of the previous night had blown down an immense tree up there. The roots had loosened a big stone. Sautene and a band of Indians had followed for the purpose of recapturing Nora and killing her escort. He had sat down on the stone when it gave way under him.

Such an accident alarmed the superstitious redskins, of course, and they fled from the spot with all the speed they could muster.

"Louis Sautene," said Dan McCue, "if you get away from me again I'll be your best friend for life. I didn't expect to get you so soon. Providence has given you up for punishment. If I have any mercy on you may I never receive any myself."

The Frenchman made no reply.

He was too much overwhelmed by the accident that had thrown him into the hands of his implacable foe.

Bob and Dan tied him hard and fast with deer-skin thongs.

"Now, Bob," said Dan, "we must not trust to any bonds to hold him. We must guard him in person. You and I will take turns at guard duty till we reach the hut on Michigan River again."

"Yes, Dan; I'll stand by you to the last, for I have as much against him as you have."

"All right. I'll stand first over him till relieved."

Dan led him back to the camp-fire, where he made him lie down on the ground. Then he bound his feet together so he could not even rise, much less walk.

Hegeman and Snap then opened the entrance to the cave, and found that a heavy sleet was falling.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Snap, "I'm glad of that."

"Why?" Bob asked.

"It will make a strong crust, on which we can walk."

"Oh, yes. I forgot that."

"But we will have to wait another day," said Hegeman.

"Well, we can do that."

They did.

There were fagots enough in the cave to give them fire for two or three days, so they had no fears. Their rations, too, would last another day.

They spent the day talking and story telling. In the afternoon Snap and Hegeman took turns and undertook to explore the recesses of the cavern. They found it immense. But being unable to cross the river, they did not attempt to explore that side of the cavern.

"Some day, in summer, I will come here with a lantern, and go all through it," said Snap.

"Better have friends with you in case of an accident," suggested Hegeman.

"Of course."

When they returned to the camp Bob reported that the sleet still continued.

"Glad to hear it," Hegeman said. "We'll have good walking to-morrow."

The night was passed like the first one, only one was on guard over the prisoner all the time.

Morning came, bright and brilliant. Not a cloud could be seen. Blue sky and bright sunshine invited them out. The crust on the snow was hard and strong.

"Just the thing," said old Hegeman, rubbing his great hands together in delight. "The walking will be fine."

"Let's eat breakfast and be off then," said Dan.

"I want to reach the hut by sunset."

"Oh, we can do that."

They started out and found the walking fine. The crust was smooth and hard, yet not slippery.

"This is splendid," said Nora, as she skipped alongside of Bob.

"Yes," he replied. "I don't mind traveling through such snow as this."

"Nor I. We can't lose our way, can we?"

"Oh, yes, but we are not going to do it."

"Poor mother! How I wish we could reach home to-night?"

"We can reach there to-morrow evening," he said.

"Oh, won't I be glad?"

"Yes, everybody will be glad, Nora. Everybody loves you at home."

Nora looked shyly at him and blushed.

"I wonder who loves me most?" she asked.

"Me. I do!" he quickly replied, in an undertone.

They had fallen a little behind the others.

A bright, happy look came into her eyes as her cheeks grew rosy red.

"Oh, Bob, do you really love me?" she asked.

"Yes, Nora, better than my own soul."

Their hands were clasped together in a strong grasp, and their eyes and hearts communed with each other's hand. The others seemed to sympathize with them and studiously refrained from even looking back at them.

At high noon they ate their last ration and then hurried on.

Late in the afternoon they came across two deers. One they shot. The other got away. Dan and Hegeman cut off the hams and left the rest of the carcass for the wolves.

Just as the sun was sinking behind the trees they reached the hut, where they found everything as they left it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

NORA AT THE HUT—DAN'S VENGEANCE.

"HERE we are!" cried Dan, in the best of spirits. "This is the best old fort in the Northwest. The old logs are solid and the hearth gives us the warmth one can want."

"Yes," Bob added; "and it's the best old wolf trap that ever was built."

"Let's have a fire," said Hegeman. "The little girl must be cold."

"Oh, no," said Nora. "I am not cold. The brisk walking has put me all in a glow."

"But you are cold for all that, lass," said the kind-hearted old man, "and we must have some supper, you know."

"Oh, yes, of course; and I will cook it, too."

Snap soon got a fire started. Then he piled fagots till it burned brightly, after which the deers were put on.

"What a big fire-place!" said Nora.

"Yes, it's a generous old wood eater," remarked Hegeman.

"If the hut was not so well ventilated it would make it too hot for us," added Bob.

When the logs burned and glowing coals were formed, Snap cut large slices from one of the deer hams and proceeded to broil them.

"Let me cook it," said Nora.

"Oh, no. You are our guest," said the old hunter. "You must let us do the work," and he patted her on the head in a fatherly way.

Suddenly they were startled by the howling of a solitary wolf out in the woods on the east side.

"Ah! The savory fragrance of broiled venison!"

will make a wolf howl five miles off," remarked Hegeman.

"Yes," said Bob, "and draw his scalp right through the cracks of the hut."

"Bob," Nora asked, "what are those holes cut there for?"

"Wait awhile and you'll see," he replied.

"Why wait? Can't you tell me now?"

"Oh, yes. They are scalping holes."

"Scalping holes?"

"Yes."

She looked at him and then at the holes. Then she shook her head.

"I don't understand."

"Well, a hungry wolf will come along after awhile," said Bob, "and smelling the broiled venison, will poke his head through one of those holes and howl for some of it. When he draws back he will leave his scalp with us."

"Why, how is that? Who can scalp a live wolf?"

Just then a starving wolf thrust his head through one of the holes and whined for some of the savory venison.

Bob quickly got out his knife, whilst Mike arranged the noose. Holding a piece of venison within a few inches of the wolf's nose, Mike slipped the noose and caught him.

Bob quickly worked the knife, and taking an ear in his right hand, jerked the whole scalp off, to the surprise and wonder of Nora.

Released and minus his head covering, the wolf turned a series of somersaults in the snow, howling like a demon the while. Then, as if in hopes of being able to run away from his agony, he set off over the crusted snow like a streak of greased lightning.

"Oh, you ought to kill them," said Nora.

"He is still alive, and will be more sayage than ever."

"There's where you are mistaken," said Bob, washing the blood off his hands with snow. "If he runs into a pack of wolves the smell of blood on him will make them pounce on him and devour him. He will fight back, of course, and every one from whom he draws blood. Thus a whole pack will destroy itself, and the work of destruction goes on."

"Oh, I didn't know that," she said.

"Supper!" sung out Snap.

They turned to and ate heartily of the hot, freshly boiled steaks, and never did people enjoy a supper more.

During the evening over a dozen wolves came by to leave their scalps. The Wolf Boys had any amount of fun with them.

But at last they began to feel sleepy. The long walk of the day and the genial warmth of the fire made them drowsy. They all laid down but Bob. He sat up as guard over the captive Frenchman.

After four hours, Dan arose and relieved him, and Bob slept till sunrise.

They then had breakfast of venison steaks and coffee.

"Now, sister," said Dan to Nora, "Mr. Hegeman and Mr. Judkins will take you home. We will stay here a few days longer and—"

"Why, won't there be any danger?" she asked.

"No, not a bit."

She was not quite satisfied.

"I will go," said Bob.

That satisfied her completely. She was desperately in love with Bob and he with her.

"All right," said Dan, "we will be along, too, in a few days, with the scalps."

After breakfast, Bob and Nora, led by the two old hunters, set out for home. Dan, Snap and Mike remained behind in the hut.

"Now, Sautene, we are going to have some fun with you."

"*Mon Dieu!* You wouldn't murder an unarmed prisoner?"

"No. I wouldn't murder you in any condition, you don't deserve to die by any man's hand. I am going to see that your relatives, the wolves, make way with you."

"*Sacre!* Kill me, like a man!"

"If you were a man I would. A brute should die like a brute."

Dan then commenced cutting the clothes off the wretch without touching the thongs that bound him.

"*Mon Dieu, man!* What mean you?" Sautene demanded.

"Business," replied Dan.

He stripped him nearly to the skin.

"Take him on your shoulders," Mike, Dan said to the Irishman, "and bring him out to the tree."

"I will, bedad!" and the brawny young athlete threw him over his shoulder as though he were a small boy, and bore him out to the tree, from which he escaped so mysteriously a week before.

"You know something about this tree," Dan said. "If you get away this time I pledge you my everlasting friendship."

Sautene saw that Dan meant to make an end of him this time. He began to weaken.

"Pardon, Monsieur McCue."

"Never!" hissed Dan. "I could have forgiven anything against myself, but my sister! Never—never!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DEATH OF SAUTENE.

THE long-wished-for hour of Dan McCue's vengeance had come.

His hated foe was in his power.

Sautene was a brute who never knew mercy—who never showed it to any living thing.

Why, then, should he expect mercy where he had never shown any?

Why should the young Wolf Boy, whom he had so deeply wronged, show him mercy?

Dan hated him as he hated the wolves that devoured his beloved father. He would show him no mercy. He would watch and gloat over his death agonies, but show no other interest.

"Hold him up, Mike," he said, "till I tie this about right."

"Up he is," said Mike, as he held him up as high as he could reach.

Dan tied him to the limb.

"Now, let him swing."

Mike released his hold, and the doomed Frenchman again swung from the very limb from which he had once escaped.

"That's about right," Dan remarked. "If the wolves don't get him Jack Frost will. I am not particular as to what takes him off. No man could soil his hand with the blood of such a wretch. Louis Sautene, I spit on you!" and with that he spat in the wretch's face.

"Diable!" hissed the infuriated brute. "You would not do that were my arms free."

"Oh, talk to the wolves; I see three of them out there now. Come away, Mike."

The two re-entered the hut.

Attracted by the venison in the hut, the three wolves Dan had espied came briskly forward.

They looked up at the man swinging about five feet from the ground, and snuffed their noses lolled their tongues out, and then prepared to spring up for a bite.

"Ugh! Be off!" yelled Sautene, wriggling and squirming like an impaled worm.

But they would not "be off." They wanted to be on. They were hungry—starving, and were determined to have something to eat if they could get it.

One of them had sprung up and nipped his foot.

Dan had taken his shoes off, so the white fangs drew blood.

"Oh, *Mon Dieu!*" groaned the wretch, as the blood dropped down into the open mouths of the hungry crew. "Monsieur Schnaps! Monsieur de Erin! Monsieur McCue!"

Neither of the three watching men in the hut paid any attention to his calls.

Getting a taste of blood, the ravenous brutes became perfectly frantic in their eagerness to get more.

They sprang upward, all three at a time, each getting a taste. One drew off his sock from one foot, and eagerly swallowed it. Another tore off a toe.

"Oh, oh, ugh! Help! Begone, begone! Oh, all the saints protect me!"

Finally, one of the wolves got his fangs fast in the wretch's foot, and swung there.

His howls were perfectly frightful. Snap and the others had never heard anything like it in their lives.

But mercy they would not show him. Snap had reason to hate him, and Dan had sworn to see him die by the wolves.

At last the swinging wolf dropped to the ground with a piece of the Frenchman's foot in his mouth. Whilst he was devouring it, the others were leaping up and tearing the flesh from his legs.

Howls, imprecations, supplications burst from the doomed wretch.

Still the ravenous brutes sprang up and tore him. He grew weaker. He could no longer sway his legs to and fro to escape

them. He could only hang there and let the tear and tear, munch and chaw on him!

Heavens, what a fate!

But he deserved it.

Nora McCue was avenged.

The wolves howled.

More came.

Sautene yelled for mercy.

None was shown him.

Snap!

Another piece was torn away.

Snap again, and the whole calf of his leg was torn from the bone.

Blood poured down on the monsters in a stream.

"He can't hold out much longer," said Dan.

"Gosh, no!" said Snap. "He'll bleed to death."

"Hanged if I don't believe he has fainted!" said Dan.

"Yes."

He hung limp and motionless.

"He'll bleed to death before he comes to again."

"Yes."

"What shall we do?"

"Let him hang. We'll use him for bait."

"All right! There come more wolves."

"There must be at least a dozen there now."

"Yes."

"Let's lay out a few scalps."

Crack!

Crack!

Two rifle shots laid two of them on the ground.

The others were too intent after the carcass above to notice those around them.

Dan and Snap reloaded.

Crack!

Crack!

Two more wolves down.

Boom! went Mike's musket, and the buck-shot wounded at least a half dozen.

Each wounded wolf thought some other wolf had hurt him, and a free fight began.

"Confound your old musket!" growled Dan. "It always spoils the fun."

"Begob!" replied Mike, "it's made all the fun we've had, I'm thinking."

"Gosh, yes!" said Snap, laughing.

"Well, may be it has, but it breaks up the game nearly every time," growled Dan.

"Kicks things over, eh?" suggested Snap.

"Yes, front and rear."

The wolves fought savagely awhile, and then a dozen or so of them again turned their attention to the swinging banquet over their heads.

Thus the day passed.

The wretch was dead. His legs were eaten off nearly to his body.

Just before sunset Dan took sure aim at the cord that held him to the limb and fired. The ball cut it in twain, and the miserable wretch found a sepulcher in the hungry maws of the wolves.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

"THAT ends it," said Dan, as he saw the legless trunk of Sautene drop down into the hungry mouths of the wolves.

"That ends him, at least," remarked Snap.

"We won't be troubled by him any more."

"No. I am satisfied with my vengeance."

"I think you ought to be," Snap said.

"I am. Let's rest to-night, and set out early to-morrow for home."

"Good!"

Mike was jubilant.

He had scalps enough to make the first payment on a farm as well as to pay for help in putting up a double log cabin on it. He was, therefore, very anxious to go back and establish himself as a settler, and start a farm.

That night the wolves howled around the hut incessantly. It was music that made the hunters sleep well, for as long as the wolves were around they knew that no other foes were about.

Daylight found them preparing to leave the hut. They each had as many wolf scalps as they could carry.

But when they were ready to go, they found another pack of wolves that were disposed to dispute the right of way with them.

"Gosh!" grunted Snap. "That's twenty dollars out there. Let's get 'em!"

They laid down their load of scalps, and seized their guns again.

Crack!

Crack!

Boom!
Three wolves went down.
Our heroes reloaded and kept up the fire. In fifteen or twenty minutes there was not a live wolf in sight.

They went out and divided the trophies equally.

Then they closed the door of the hut and went away.

The hard crust on the snow made the walking fine. The crisp morning air invigorated them and they made good time.

Being fast walkers, they reached the settlement that night.

The first house they struck was that of the widow McCue, Dan's mother.

She received her gallant boy with a glad cry and open arms.

Nora ran into his arms, too, and then she kissed both Snap and Mike.

"You were both so kind to me," she said. "Be gob, I'd loike ter be koind ter ye all me loife," said Mike, licking his chops as though the kiss had left something on his lips.

They all laughed good-naturedly, and then sat down to a hearty supper.

"Where's Bob?" Dan asked.

"He left here only an hour since," said Mrs. McCue, looking toward her daughter Nora.

Nora blushed, hid her face, and remained silent.

"Look here, Nora," said Dan, "don't be ashamed of it. Have you and Bob—hello! Come back!"

Nora had darted into another room, her pretty face blushing like a red rose.

"Don't tease her, Dan," his mother said. "She's young yet, and it's her first sweetheart, you know."

"Well, I hope he'll be her last one. Bob is a good fellow, and as true as steel. I hope they'll make a match."

"Come, supper is getting cold," the mother said, anxious to change the subject.

That evening Snap and Mike remained till a late hour at the widow's house, talking over their hunt, and telling about the wonderful cave which had sheltered them from the pitiless snow and sleet.

The widow was deeply interested. She could sit and listen for hours to the quaint stories Snap told.

By and by Snap and Mike left and crossed the river to the former's cabin.

The next day they all met again—the four Wolf Boys—and divided the scalps. They had something over two hundred each. Every one was carried before an agent of the State, who inspected them and gave warrants on the State Treasurer for as many dollars as they had wolf scalps.

"This is better than farming," said Mike; "I'll go again av yer will."

"So will I," the others said, and in a few minutes another hunt was arranged and agreed on.

They remained away nearly a month, during which time they secured over one thousand scalps.

In those days wolves were very numerous, and the winter was such a severe one that the wolves were more bold than usual—a fact that rendered them easy prey to the hunters.

When spring came wolves were very scarce in the vicinity of the Michigan river settlement. But Mike had made enough to buy him a farm, and Snap felt rich enough to want to live in more comfort and style.

As for Bob Stewart, he boldly asked for Nora.

Mother and daughter consented, and the little witch became Mrs. Bob Stewart.

Bob built a house near the widow's. Dan did likewise, and then took Bob's sister to wife—"a kind of a swap" as Snap said.

Then, to the surprise of everybody, Snap married the widow.

"Hurrah for the old Wolf Boy!" yelled Mike when he heard it.

A year later Mike did likewise—the last of THE WOLF BOYS OF MICHIGAN.

[THE END.]

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- 917 Buffalo Bill's Boy Broncho Breaker; or, The Youngest Hero on the Plains.....by Paul Braddon
- 918 A Sailor at Fifteen; or, From Cabin Boy to Captain.....by J. G. Bradley
- 919 Henpecked—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 920 Homeless Hal; or, A Poor Boy's Life in a Great City.....by Captain Will Dayton
- 921 Wild Bill's Boy Partner; or, The Redskins' Gold Secret.....by Paul Braddon
- 922 Muldoon's Christmas—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 923 Captain Jack, the Pirate's Foe; or, The Devilish of the Indies.....by Roger Starbuck
- 924 A Bad Boy at School—comic.....by "Ed"
- 925 Mr. McGinty—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 926 Lineman Joe, the Boy Telegraph Climber.....by C. Little
- 927 Shipped to China; or, The Life of a Runaway Boy.....by J. G. Bradley
- 928 Searching for Stanley; or, Tom Stevens' Adventures in Africa.....by R. T. Emmet
- 929 Boarding School; or, Sam Bowser at Work and Play—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 930 Young Magic; or, The Boy With a Charmed Life.....by Paul Braddon
- 931 Muldoon Out West—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 932 The Boy Treasure Hunters; or, Searching for Lost Money.....by John Sherman
- 933 Senator Muldoon—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 934 Sam Johnson, the Negro Detective.....by Harry Kane
- 935 Frank Reade, Jr., in the Far West; or, The Search for a Lost Gold Mine.....by "Noname"
- 936 The Waif of Mystery Island; or, The Adventures of a Boy Who Was Kidnapped.....by Roger Starbuck
- 937 The Mystery of the Sealed Door; or, The Oldest House in New York.....by R. T. Emmet
- 938 Island No. 7; or, The Pirates of Lake Michigan.....by Geo. W. Goode
- 939 Our Landlord; or, Life in French Flats—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 940 From Jockey to Judge; or, the Boy Who Was Always Ahead.....by C. Little
- 941 Alone in New York; or, Ragged Rob, the Newsboy.....by N. S. Wood (The Young American Actor)
- 942 The Boy Express Messenger; or, Fighting the Train Robbers.....by John Sherman
- 943 Next Door; or, The Irish Twins—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 944 The Limbless Hunter; or, Si Slocum's Revenge.....by Roger Starbuck
- 945 The Boy in Red; or, The Czar's Masked Messengers.....by R. T. Emmet
- 946 Adrift in the Antarctic; or, Two Years on a Continent of Ice.....by C. Little
- 947 The Aldermen Sweeneys of New York—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 948 Pawnee Bill; or, the White Chief's First War Trail.....by Paul Braddon
- 949 The Boy Showman; or, A Circus Manager at Sixteen.....by John Sherman
- 950 Tip Top Teddy, the Young Foretopman; or, Four Years Before the Mast.....by J. G. Bradley
- 951 Mrs. Brown's Boarding-House—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 952 The Boy Sheriff; or, The Regulators of Pecan Valley.....by R. T. Emmet
- 953 The Buried Gold Ship; or, The Sailor Boy's Ghost.....by C. Little
- 954 Our Future President; or, The Oak That Came From the Acorn—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 955 General Crook's Boy Guide; or, The Great Indian Fighter's Black Hills Trail.....by Paul Braddon
- 956 Three Yankee Boys in Africa; or, the Giants of the Congo.....by Percy B. St. John
- 957 The Boy Surveyor; or, Running Out a Railroad in the Indian Country.....by John Sherman
- 958 Rob Rounds, the Young Fireman.....by C. Little
- 959 Muldoon's Base Ball Club—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 960 Fair-Weather Frank, the Dashing Sailor Boy.....by J. G. Bradley
- 961 Eagle Dan, the Boy Hermit of the Rockies.....by Paul Braddon
- 962 Captain Lewis, the Pirate.....by C. Little
- 963 Muldoon's Base Ball Club in Boston—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 964 Harry Horton; or, From a Waif to a Millionaire.....by Captain Will Dayton
- 965 The Prairie Post Boy; or, The Scalp Hunters of Apache Land.....by Paul Braddon
- 966 Chums to the Death; or, The Adventures of a Boy Marine.....by Roger Starbuck
- 967 Muldoon Abroad—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 968 An Engineer at 18; or, The Boy Driver of the Lightning Express.....by R. T. Emmet
- 969 Hardpan Harry, the Hunted Boy; or, A Young New Yorker Among Western Outlaws.....by C. Little
- 970 The Property Boy; or, Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes.....by N. S. Wood
- 971 Muldoon's Base Ball Club in Philadelphia—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 972 The Mystery of the Fire Ship; or, A Brave Boy Sailing Master.....by Roger Starbuck
- 973 The Boy Bicycle Scouts; or, On the Wheel Among the Redskins.....by Paul Braddon
- 974 Rob Rider, the Circus Equestrian; or, Two Years Under the Canvas.....by Geo. W. Goode
- 975 The Shortys' Minstrels; or, Working the Same Old Rackets—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 976 The Tunnel Under the Sea; or, The Adventures of Two Drowned Boys.....by R. T. Emmet
- 977 Pawnee Bill Doomed; or, The Great Scout in No Man's Land.....by Paul Braddon
- 978 The Buffalo Hunters; or, Wild Life on the Plains.....by Robert Maynard
- 979 Little Tommy Bounce; or, Something Like His Dad—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 980 The Treasure Trove; or, The Buccaneers of the Gulf.....by J. G. Bradley
- 981 Alone on a Wreck; or, The Mystery of a Scuttled Ship.....by R. T. Emmet
- 982 Dan Darling's Cruise; or, Three Boys' Lucky Vacation.....by H. K. Shackelford
- 983 Muldoon's Picnic—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 984 Luke Lines, the Boy Stage Driver; or, The Four-in-Hand of Keno Camp.....by Paul Braddon
- 985 Jockey Jim, the Daring Boy Rider; or, Winning His Fortune in the Saddle.....by Robert Maynard
- 986 The Lost Boy Captain; or, The Secret of the Hidden Whirlpool.....by Roger Starbuck
- 987 Honest Jack Jarrett; or, How He Made His Money.....by H. K. Shackelford
- 988 Rob Rivers, the Raft Boy; or, Log Driving on the Missouri River.....by R. T. Emmet
- 989 Muldoon the Cop, Part I—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 990 Muldoon the Cop, Part II—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 991 The Boy Wrecker; or, The Young Pilot of the Breakers.....by Roger Starbuck
- 992 Born to be Rich; or, A Boy's Adventures in Wall Street.....by H. K. Shackelford
- 993 Frank Reade, Jr., and His Queen Clipper of the Clouds—Part I.....by "Noname"
- 994 Frank Reade Jr., and His Queen Clipper of the Clouds—Part II.....by "Noname"
- 995 The Boy Lawyer; or, Fighting For a Stolen Million.....by R. T. Emmet
- 996 Little Tommy Bounce on His Travels—comic.....by Peter Pad
- 997 The Little Black Rover; or, The Mysterious Privateer of New York Bay.....by Corporal Morgan Rattler
- 998 Pawnee Bill's Oath; or, The Oklahoma Scout's Lost Gold Cache.....by Paul Braddon
- 999 Jimmy Grimes Jr.; or, The Torment of the Village—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 1000 The Pirates of the Black Cave; or, The Mystery of the Hidden Lake.....by Roger Starbuck
- 1001 Through Thick and Thin; or, Our Eyes Abroad.....by Barton Bertram
- 1002 Jack and Jim; or, Rackets and Scrapes at School—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 1003 Little Quick Shot; or, Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Europe.....by Paul Braddon
- 1004 The Mysterious Light Ship; or, The Smugglers of the Death Coast.....by Roger Starbuck
- 1005 Muldoon's Grocery Store—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 1006 Muldoon's Grocery Store—comic.....by Tom Teaser
- 1007 Frank Reade, Jr., and His Monitor of the Air; or, Helping a Friend in Need.....by "Noname"
- 1008 Gerald O'Grady's Grit; or, The Branded Irish Lad.....by Corporal Morgan Rattler
- 1009 Denver Dan, Jr., the Silver King; or, The Richest Lode in Nevada.....by "Noname"
- 1010 Six Weeks in the Saddle; or, The Adventures of a Boys' Riding School.....by R. T. Emmet